

***‘There is no going back to my city but no permanent stay here in Tirana
either’:***

**Analysing multiple gendered trajectories and experiences of migrant women in
post-1991 Albania**

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Résumé

Les objectifs de cette thèse sont, d'une part, d'explorer et de comprendre l'interrelation entre le genre et la migration et, d'autre part, d'analyser et de tracer les trajectoires migratoires des migrantes albanaises. Les approches féministe et constructiviste fournissent le cadre épistémologique de cette recherche. La perspective féministe permet d'analyser de manière critique les expériences et les voix des femmes, en tenant compte des différences entre elles. De même, cette dissertation repose sur l'hypothèse que le genre est une construction sociale et un principe organisateur des sociétés. Ce cadre épistémologique permet de comprendre comment le genre est lié au processus de migration, comment la construction sociale du genre façonne la migration, comment le concept de la « femme migrante » est construit et comment les différents processus de migration influencent les rapports sociaux de sexe.

La représentation dominante de la migration albanaise met l'accent sur la distinction entre la migration internationale, dans laquelle les hommes migrent pour aider leur famille économiquement et les femmes les rejoignent ultérieurement, et la migration interne, dans laquelle les femmes se déplacent en Albanie et s'occupent du reste de la famille. L'objectif de cette dissertation est de nuancer cette représentation dominante en étudiant les trajectoires migratoires des femmes albanaises et en découvrant les différentes combinaisons de ces trajectoires. Dans cette dissertation, la migration est considérée comme un processus configuré par le genre pouvant inclure plusieurs trajectoires. De plus, la migration peut être à la fois exploitante et libératrice ; cela peut conduire à de nouvelles opportunités et à de meilleures conditions économiques mais aussi à de nouvelles contraintes et insécurités liées au genre.

Cette recherche qualitative est basée sur trente-deux entretiens avec des femmes migrantes vivant à Tirana à un moment particulier de leur vie et de leur processus de migration. Certaines femmes n'ont migré que vers l'intérieur à Tirana, tandis que d'autres se sont déplacées internationalement et après un certain temps sont retournées à Tirana, pas à leur lieu d'origine. L'analyse révèle une relation complexe entre le genre et la migration dans laquelle les femmes migrantes ne passent pas automatiquement de l'inégalité à la libération. Au lieu de cela, les résultats montrent que les femmes migrantes connaissent diverses contraintes et inégalités de genre qui peuvent varier de celles de leurs villes natales mais se basent sur le même mécanisme des rapports hiérarchique de genre. Les femmes, cependant, ne traversent pas passivement le processus migratoire, mais mobilisent leurs ressources disponibles et témoignent leurs capacités d'agentivité, principalement sous la forme de tactiques déployées dans le cadre hiérarchique des relations de genre existantes.

Summary

The aims of this dissertation are, first, to explore and understand the interrelation of gender and migration and, second, to investigate and trace the migration trajectories of Albanian female migrants. The feminist and the constructivist approaches provide the epistemological lenses of this research. The feminist perspective allows critically analysing women's experiences and voices, taking into account the differences among them. As well, this dissertation is based on the assumption that gender is a social construct and an organising principle of societies. The framework of these two epistemological lenses facilitates understanding how in the experiences of Albanian migrant women gender is related to the migration process, how the social construction of gender shapes migration, how the concept of the 'migrant woman' is constructed and how different migration processes influence gender relations.

The dominant portrayal of Albanian migration distinguishes between international migration, in which men migrate to help their families economically and women later join to reunite their families, and internal migration, in which women move within Albania and care for the rest of the family. The objective of this dissertation is to nuance this dominant portrayal by investigating the migration trajectories of Albanian women and uncovering their various combinations of these trajectories. In this dissertation, migration is considered to be a gendered process that may include multiple trajectories. Furthermore, migration can be both exploitative and liberating; it can lead to new opportunities and better economic situations but also to new gender constraints and insecurities.

This qualitative research comprises interviews with thirty-two migrant women living in Tirana at a particular moment in their life and migration process. Some women only migrated internally to Tirana, while others moved internationally and after a certain time returned to Tirana, not their place of origin. The analysis uncovers a complex relation between gender and migration in which migrant women do not automatically move from inequality to liberation. Instead, the results show that migrant women experience various gender constraints and inequalities that might be different from those in their hometowns but have the same underlying mechanism of unequal gender relations. The women, though, do not passively go through the migration process but mobilise the available resources and manifest agency, mostly in the form of tactics deployed within the existing gendered power relations.

Mots-clés en Français: migration féminine, Albanie, agentivité, trajectoires migratoires multiples

Key words in English: female migration, Albania, agency, multiple migration trajectories

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INTRODUCTION

1. Motivations for this research

International and internal migration have characterised Albania since 1990, the last year of the communist¹ regime established in the aftermath of the Second World War. While the number of studies on Albanian migration, both international and internal, has grown, only a few adopt the perspective of gender. Employing a gender perspective means not simply using statistics disaggregated by sex but also explaining the processes and discourses of migration involving women and men, their relations to each other (Erel, Morokvasic and Shinozaki 2003) and relations among women themselves (Parreñas 2009).

In the early 2000s, while working at the Albanian National Institute of Statistics (INSTAT), I was part of the research group Gender and Migration, whose primary product was the publication *Gender perspectives in Albania* (Ekonomi et al. 2004). Our analysis focused on the Albanian census of 2001 and marked the first serious attempt to analyse gender and internal migration in Albania. This work benefited me, firstly because, as a recent sociology graduate, I was thrown into the vast sea of gender and migration studies, and secondly because this particular research highlighted many gaps in knowledge concerning the relationship between gender and migration in Albania. Furthermore, working with census data revealed the need for qualitative research to grasp the dynamics of migration processes from a gender perspective. This experience catalysed my goal to further pursue the analysis of gender and migration in Albania. I later worked on other projects related to gender issues in Albania but came back to realising this initial idea by embarking on the extensive journey of doctoral research.

This research, however, also has more personal motivation: my entire life has been characterised by movement, internal and international. I was born in Shkodër, a large city in northern Albania, while my parents, both from the south, worked there. My family's migration was representative of the primary pattern of internal Albanian migration during the communist period: the state posted you wherever there was a need for you. My father was next assigned to Tirana and later Saranda in southern Albania. In 1990, I was back in Tirana, and in 1994, after finishing high

¹ Albania was called the People's Republic of Albania from 1946 until 1976 and the People's Socialist Republic of Albania from 1976 until 1991. Nevertheless, the literature, both Albanian and foreign, frequently refers to the 1944–1991 period and the state during that period as the communist regime, the communist period, totalitarianism, the socialist state, socialism and monism. This terminology applies not only to Albania but also to Central and Eastern European countries more generally, which are often called the Communist Bloc, the socialist states and similar terms. In the case of Albania, therefore, I use the terms socialist period, socialist regime, communist period and communist regime interchangeably.

school, I went to Switzerland. There, I experienced my longest period of not moving—stillness—so far in my life: eight years. Upon my return to Albania, I had another period of stillness of ten years, and then, in 2012, I was back to international relocations. Migrating internally or internationally is not itself a reason to pursue research on gender and migration in Albania. However, these experiences gave me an extra push, a more personal one, to choose this theme for my doctoral research, through which I aim to make a modest contribution to the numerous studies on gender and migration and to better understand my life experience.

2. Research context

The feminist and the constructivist approaches provide the epistemological lenses of this research. The aim of the feminist standpoint adopted in this dissertation is to critically analyse women's experiences and voices, taking into account the differences among them. This dissertation focuses on Albanian migrant women's experiences and starts with the assumption that gender is a social construct and an organising principle of society. Within the framework of these two epistemological lenses, I aim to understand the relation of gender to the migration process, particularly how the social construction of gender shapes migration and the construction of the migrant woman, on one hand, and how different migration processes influence gender relations, on the other.

Until the mid-1980s, women were mostly invisible in migration studies, except as the family members in charge of the domestic sphere and childrearing. When addressed, women were treated as the dependents of men, who were considered to be the leading providers of household resources (Dahinden et al. 2007, 7). These views started to change once scholars such as Morokvasic (1984) introduced a gender perspective into migration studies, and women's particular experiences in migration processes have since been widely considered. Studies have shown that gender informs migration processes through migrants' projects, trajectories, work opportunities, family relations and social networks (Boyd and Grieco 2003; Morokvasic 2003; Dahinden et al. 2007; Silvey 2004; Oso Casas 2004; Mahler and Pessar 2001).

Scholars have demonstrated that many women migrate on their own to help their families economically, in contrast to the image of women as passive dependent subjects often presented in the migration literature (Vianello 2009; Schmoll 2006; Parreñas 2000; Oso Casas 2006; Dahinden et al. 2007; Erel, Morokvasic and Shinozaki 2003; Kofman and Rhaguram 2015). Women participate in the decision-making process regarding migration, receive and send remittances and support the migration of other family members and themselves (Dahinden et al. 2007). Additionally, analyses of

migration have also considered the intersection of gender with class and race (Dahinden 2010; Silvey 2004; Parreñas 2000). Studies have also shown that it is difficult to draw universal conclusions regarding the interrelation of gender and migration. According to Dahinden et al. (2007), migration influences gender relations in various ways; it may reinforce gender inequalities or question and transform them. Migration can be either exploitative or liberating: it might lead to new opportunities and better economic situations but also to new gender constraints and precarity (Morokvasic 2003; Dahinden et al. 2007; Moujoud 2008; Sri Tharan 2010).

Migration was long studied mainly in terms of immigration from only the perspective of the destination country (Morokvasic 1984a, 17). Studies on transnationalism and the multiplicity of migration trajectories (Morokvasic 1984a, 2003; Dahinden 2010, 2010a, 2010b; Vianello 2011; Vullnetari 2012; Mai and Paladini 2013), however, have demonstrated that considering only the country of destination limits analysis of migratory processes. The realities of migration cannot be understood adequately when considered only in terms of emigration and immigration, integration and return, temporary and permanent migration, and when the migration process is understood as a one-way, unidirectional affair (Morokvasic 1984a). Other forms of migration, such as pendular movement, might not be statistically visible, as in the case of Albanian migration, but nevertheless exist. Moreover, the reasons for engaging in migration, whatever trajectory it takes, are always gendered. This dissertation adopts the concept of migration as a process, not unidirectional movement. Migration as a process encompasses various migration trajectories, including internal, international, circular and return trajectories, all shaped by and interrelated with gender.

3. The Albanian context

During the socialist era, the emancipation of women was among the state's central policies. The state followed a model similar to that in other socialist countries that Moghadam (1995) calls the women's emancipation model. This model included policies to support women's participation in the productive labour force, as well as new laws to promote the equality of men and women. A reconfiguration of gender roles and the gender division of labour occurred under socialism (Verdery 1996). However, women's increased participation in education, employment, the Albanian Labour Party and high-level bureaucracy did not translate into equal division of roles and responsibilities within the household. Traditional gender roles, with women responsible for reproductive labour and men for productive labour, persisted in the domestic space.

The situation of women in the aftermath of the fall of the communist regime demonstrated this persistence of traditional family roles (Gal and Kligman 2000; Verdery 1996; Brunbauer 2000).

Retraditionalisation—a return to traditional values and family life, once again making women’s place the home (Kligman 1994, 256; Verdery 1996, 79)—took place, with various nuances in the former socialist countries. Following the trend in these nations (Heyns 1995; Rosenberg 1991; Morokvasic 2003; Gal and Kligman 2000; Bonfiglioli 2014), women in Albania, too, retired to the domestic space and reproductive work. This situation has changed over the years as Albanian women have increased participation in the formal labour market, politics and civil society organisations. Other, less visible phenomena have accompanied these changes, including women’s engagement in the informal labour market, working long hours for low pay and no social protection; rising numbers of female university students; and a falling fertility rate.

Uniquely among former communist countries, Albania entirely forbid migration from the country during the socialist era. Consequently, after the fall of Communism in 1991, many Albanians felt a need for freedom of movement, regardless of whether they were allowed to cross other countries’ borders. Since the fall of socialism and the accompanying erosion of the state infrastructure that strictly regulated internal and international migration, an estimated 1.5 million people have left Albania, more than half of the resident population in 2011 (Vullnetari 2012, 15; Gëdeshi and Jorgoni 2012, 6). The first decade of post-socialism witnessed mostly male migration, but data gathered in 2001 point to a shift: the gap between male and female migrants leaving Albania has become increasingly insignificant (Vullnetari 2012; INSTAT 2002; King and Vullnetari 2012; Galanxhi et al. 2004). The ratio of women and men involved in international migration rose from 1:5 in 1991 to 3:5 in 2001 (Azzarri and Carletto 2009, 7). Although women migrate abroad primarily for family reunification, the two primary exceptions are ‘professional women and students moving to obtain a high-status qualification or job that brings prestige to the family’ (King and Vullnetari 2012, 213). As well, data (Galanxhi et al. 2004; Ekonomi et al. 2004; INSTAT 2002) on internal Albanian migration reveal that not men but women are more likely to migrate internally. According to the 2011 census (Galanxhi et al. 2014), women made up 59 per cent of internal migrants in the 2001–2011 period. Put differently, the sex ratio for internal migration during this period was 100 women to 69 men.

Numerous studies on Albanian migration, primarily to Greece and Italy, were conducted during the 1990s (e.g. Tarifa 1995; United Nations Development Programme [UNDP] 2000; Barjaba 2000; Barjaba, Dervishi and Perrone 1992; Bërxfholi and Doka 1996) and have been enriched by a proliferation² of research on Albanian migration since 2001. A major reason for this proliferation

² Studies on Albanian migration are numerous, and this short review cannot include all of them. Some provide an overall view of Albanian migration, while others focus on specific aspects.

was that the Albanian Population and Housing Census of 2001 gave the first overall picture of the dramatic magnitude of internal and international migration in Albania. The census was followed by the 2002 and 2005 Albanian Living Standards Measurement Surveys (ALSMS). This research stream focused on internal and international migration and initially drew mostly from the statistical data generated by the 2001 census and the 2002 ALSMS. INSTAT publications based on the 2001 census data shared insightful analysis of internal migration (Galanxhi et al. 2004) from a gender perspective (Ekonomi et al. 2004) and built an overall picture of the scope of international migration (INSTAT 2002). Since the early 2000s, Albanian migration has become an attractive case study for domestic and foreign scholars, who treat the country as a laboratory for the study of migration (King 2005). Scholars have also analysed the ALSMS 2002 data to capture statistical insights about internal and international movement (Carletto et al. 2006; Azzarri and Carletto 2009; Zezza, Carletto and Davis 2005; Stecklov et al. 2010). Topics of analysis have included remittances (Uruci and Gëdeshi 2003; Vullnetari and King 2011; Vullnetari and King 2010), high-skilled migration (Orgocka 2005; Trimcev, Dakli and Ymeri 2005; Gërmenji and Milo 2011; Gërmenji and Gëdeshi 2008; EMA 2010; Zenelaga and Sotirofski 2011) and the linkage between internal and international migration (Vullnetari 2012; King, Skeldon and Vullnetari 2008).

More research on migrants' experiences incorporating a gender perspective followed (Çaro 2011; Vullnetari 2012; Gjermani 2004; Vullnetari 2009; Vullnetari and King 2015) and promoted the visibility of women in the internal and international processes of migration in Albania. Furthermore, research on Albanian migrants abroad from the perspective of receiving countries (Vathi 2011; Olsson 2014; Mai and Paladini 2013; Maroukis and Gemi 2011; Vaiou 2002; Labrianidis and Lyberaki 2004; Gemi 2015) had used other valuable reference sources. Some studies have shown that statistical analysis of migration often obscures or does not grasp the experiences of women migrants. Analyses from migrants' perspective (Vullnetari 2012; Çaro 2011; Gjermani 2004; Olsson 2014) have demonstrated that the dynamics are far more complex, as is the position of women in the migratory processes. Thus, there remains space for research to understand the experiences of Albanian migrant women and the broader interrelations between migration and gender.

Although figures (INSTAT 2002; Ekonomi et al. 2005; World Bank 2007; Stecklov et al. 2010) at the national level reveal a predominance of men in international migration and women in internal movements, women's participation in migration processes in Albania is more complex. Amid the numerous studies on Albanian migration, few focus specifically on the entanglement of gender and migration and even fewer on the experiences of migrant women. Furthermore, in-depth investigation of the migration trajectories of Albanian women that might not be limited only to internal and international migration could produce profound insights. These migratory trajectories

undoubtedly influence gender relations, either by reinforcing the inequalities between women and men or by challenging gender norms and transforming gender relations.

4. Research objectives and question(s)

International migration in Albania has been considered to be a male-dominated phenomenon, particularly the first decade of 1990–2000, when men migrated for economic reasons, and women remained in Albania or moved internally to care for their families. Various scholars (Vullnetari 2009; King and Vullnetari 2012; Çaro 2011), however, have shown that women's participation in Albanian migration processes is more complex than apparent in macro-level studies. Researchers have called for providing wider knowledge of women's experiences and roles in migration in Albania.

This dissertation is situated in this context, and the primary objective of this research is:

To explore and understand the interrelation of gender and migration in Albania and, more specifically, to examine how gender influences the process of migration for women and how the effects of migration transform gender relations.

This study follows a qualitative methodology aimed at answering a general question and several sub-questions guiding the research process. The central research question explored in this research is:

How can the interrelation of gender and migration in Albania be understood?

The central research question is broken into four main sub-questions, further refined into the main points on which this research focuses.

- 1. How is gender embedded in the process of migration by women, and how does migration affect the transformation of gender relations, gender norms and hierarchies?*
 - How does gender inform the reasons for and the decision making to migrate and the preparation for migration?
 - In what negotiations do migrant women engage during their migration trajectories?
 - How is women's migration connected to constructed gendered roles, obligations and expectations?
 - How does migration influence gender relations within the household, the community and the labour market?

- Does migration influence gender norms and hierarchies, and if so, how?
- What social networks are mobilised during the migration process, and what are their particular roles?

2. *What tactics and strategies do Albanian migrant women employ during the migration process?*

- How is women's agency manifested during the various phases of migration and in Tirana?
- What resources do women mobilise to overcome constraints during the migration process and in Tirana?

3. *How can the migration trajectories of Albanian women be characterised?*

- In what types of migration trajectories do women in Albania engage?
- What are their reasons for following particular migration trajectories?
- How does gender influence women's participation in various migration trajectories?

4. *How can the lives of female migrants in Tirana be understood and characterised?*

- Why was Tirana chosen as the place of destination?
- What are the reasons why international and internal migrants do not return to their hometowns but stay in Tirana?
- How can female migrants' experiences in Tirana, particularly their social relations and networks and their productive and reproductive work, be understood?

This research focuses on the narratives told by women living in Tirana after trajectories of internal and international migration and, therefore, cannot give answers about what will happen next in their lives. The moment when the interviews were conducted may be only a step in their migratory journeys before they move again. However, the women's migratory experiences until the time of the interviews when they lived in Tirana help deepen understanding of Albanian migration and the interrelation of gender and migration in the Albanian context.

5. Dissertation structure

This dissertation is divided into two main parts. Part I includes the contextual chapters, theoretical framework, Albanian context and methodology. Part II has four chapters analysing the interviews and results. Chapter 1 in Part 1 discusses the theoretical framework, presents the main

lenses used in this research (feminist and constructionist epistemologies) and develops the concepts of gender and migration central to this study. The introduction of gender to migration studies and the main patterns identified in these many studies provides another framework in which the interviews are situated. This chapter laying out the theoretical framework chapter concludes with a brief presentation of the concept of empowerment used in this research and the tactics employed by women to overcome gender constraints. Chapter 2 on the Albanian context is longer and includes a brief overview of Albania and the migratory processes in the nation during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Next, the chapter discusses Tirana, the capital of Albania and the primary research site. Finally, this chapter covers women's situation in Albania setting the context for the investigation and the analysis of the interviews. Chapter 3 describes in detail the methodological strategy, the research methods and the difficulties and challenges encountered during this study, which are considered to be important parts of the research process.

The four chapters in Part 2 present analysis of the four categories of migrant women living in Tirana at the time of the research: married women who migrated internally, female students who migrated internally, international women who migrated for purposes other than education and female students who migrated internationally. The final concluding chapter presents the main analytical findings concerning the research question and the sub-questions and integrates the key findings into the theoretical lenses that framed this research. This chapter also highlights points for further research and analysis. The grid of topics that guided the interviews may be found in the Appendices.

6. Scientific importance and socio-political relevance of the research

From a scientific perspective, this dissertation is situated within two important thematic and theoretical research streams: migration and gender. Adopting an integrated approach to internal and international migration, this research is also intended to contribute to this field. Gender, as an important structuring category in society, is a central dimension of all forms of migration. An integrated description of gender and migration therefore, makes a significant scientific contribution to the study of migration, particularly to the case of Albanian migration, which is the subject of few studies using feminist lenses. Furthermore, this dissertation is aimed at uncovering details of internal and international migration by Albanian female students. Tracing the migration trajectories of women often concealed by statistical data is another contribution by this research to better understanding Albanian migration from a feminist perspective. This dissertation is thus intended to

make empirical and theoretical contributions to current scientific debates on the interrelation of gender and migration.

From a socio-political perspective, this research advances policy debates on migration and gender, highlighting the challenges and opportunities faced by women throughout migration. The research also points to gaps where government and civil society institutions can intervene. The experiences of Albanian migrant women unfortunately continue to be relatively invisible and absent, especially in policy frameworks. A goal of this research, therefore, is to identify possible avenues for further research, not only to contribute to the theoretical field of gender and migration studies, but also to the research on a policy level.

PART I: RESEARCH CONTEXT

Chapter 1: Theoretical framework

This chapter sets out the epistemological lenses and the central theoretical concepts guiding this research. Given the many theories and models regarding the intersection of gender and migration, it is important to highlight those that inspire this research and help to investigate and better understand how gender affects migration processes and, vice versa, how migration impacts gender relations. The first section of this chapter presents the epistemological perspectives adopted in this research: feminist and constructivist epistemology. The next section discusses patterns of various migration trajectories. The third section gives a brief historical overview of the debate on gender in migration studies and clarifies the theorisation of gender and migration in this dissertation. The last section briefly discusses empowerment and tactics, two interrelated concepts used in the research. Other important concepts and studies regarding the topic studied are directly addressed in the analytical chapters, 4, 5, 6 and 7.

1.1 Epistemological position: feminist standpoint and constructivist approaches

This research is based on a feminist standpoint epistemology. Various approaches and debates fall under this label, so the aim in the following is to highlight the main elements guiding this research. The origins of the epistemological and methodological focus of feminist research lie in the understandings and struggles of authors such as Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir, who ‘express their deep feelings of exclusion from the dominant avenues of knowledge building, seeing their experiences, concerns, and worth diminished and invalidated by the dominant powers of their society’ (Hesse-Biber 2012, 3).

The primary target of feminist scholars during 1960s, 70s and 80s was the androcentric bias in science. To correct this bias and to make women’s experiences visible, women were added to research samples, which allowed hearing and learning about the experiences and perspectives of women relevant to new research questions (Jackson and Scott 2002; Hesse-Biber 2012). This attempt to eradicate sexist research permeated many disciplines, such as psychology, philosophy, history, sociology, education and anthropology, and the fields of law, medicine, language and communication (Hesse-Biber 2012). The period saw the publication of many ‘ground-breaking anthologies critical of androcentric research’ (Hesse-Biber 2012, 5). It marked a defining moment shaking the traditional, taken-for-granted, male-biased knowledge frameworks (Hesse-Biber 2012)

from which ‘women were largely excluded’ (Smith 1978, 281). Moreover, this period led to a proliferation of challenges by feminist researchers and scholars to knowledge building (Hesse-Biber 2012, 8). A second significant contribution of the feminist standpoint epistemology is the focus on the experiences of marginalised women (Harding 2009). Women’s position as oppressed gives them a richer view of society (Hesse-Biber 2014), and ‘the experience and lives of marginalised people, as they understand them, provide the most significant agendas for the feminist research process’ (Harding 1993, 54).

Throughout the extensive use and development of feminist standpoint theory, it has also been subject to debate and critiques. Early critics argued that standpoint epistemology assumes that all women’s experiences match a single defining experience and neglects the diversity of women’s lives, especially the differences of race, class and sexual preference (Hesse-Biber 2012, 11). Authors such as Patricia Hill Collins (1990) and bell hooks (1984) extended the initial feminist standpoint epistemology, claiming that we cannot talk about a unique woman’s experience or standpoint as it differs by and intersects with age, sex, race and class. The concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw 1994, 1989) highlights the interaction of different types of oppression and discrimination, such as race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity and class. Authors including Mohanty (1991), Spivak (1988) and Kandiyoti (1999) introduced geographical and cultural placement as a critical dimension of feminist analysis related to the significance of women’s experiences in the global context of post-colonialism, imperialism and national identity. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, feminists focused on issues of sexual preference and disability, along with nationality and geographical region (Hesse-Biber 2012, Connell 2015). In summary, ‘feminists should not merely describe women’s situations, but consider how race, class, gender, sexual orientation, age, and material circumstances in multiple contexts render the taken for granted problematic in ways that move toward social justice’ (Olesen 2007, 426).

Feminist research, in its many variations, places women’s diverse experiences and the social institutions framing them on centre stage (Olesen 2000, 216). This focus on the experiences of women is foundational to most scholars working from the feminist standpoint approach. A main premise of feminist research is to ‘begin with experience, since it is only from such a vantage point that it is possible to see the extent to which women’s worlds are organised in ways that differ from those of men’ (Maynard 1994, 12). This research is based on this first element of the feminist standpoint epistemology, starting with women’s daily lives, voices and experiences.

Second, the feminist standpoint has the goal of ‘studying up’ meaning to critically analyse ‘what’s wrong and what’s still useful or otherwise valuable in the dominant institutions of society, their cultures, and practices’ (Harding, 2009, 195). This activity entails a political stance and a

normative commitment to gender equality (Hesse-Biber 2014; Chafetz 2006). Third, the feminist standpoint takes into account differences among women and applies an intersectional approach to social inequality. Harding (2009) urges that standpoint work should be persistently intersectional. Fourth, the feminist perspective is an achievement, not an ascription, and requires scientific work to see beyond ‘the ideological surface of [the] social relations that we all come to accept as natural’ (Harding 2009, 195). Accordingly, this research based on migrant women’s experiences starts with the assumption that gender is a social construct and an organising principle of society, as explained further in the following subsection, 1.1.1.

In this dissertation, feminist epistemology is thought in connection to the social constructivist approach. Constructivist epistemology includes a variety of strands and developments that the space of this chapter does not allow discussing. In this dissertation, constructivist epistemology implies that knowledge is socially constructed (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2009) or, in the words of Smith (1987, 72), ‘is a social accomplishment’. Constructivism

assumes that people create social reality(ies) through individual and collective actions. Rather than seeing the world as given, constructionists ask, how is it accomplished? Thus, instead of assuming realities in an external world—including global structures and local cultures—social constructionists study what people at a particular time and place take as real, how they construct their views and actions, when different constructions arise, whose constructions become taken as definitive, and how that process ensues. (Charmaz 2006, 189)

Constructivism assumes that people create the realities in which they participate and that the researcher’s interpretation of the studied realities, too, is a construction (Charmaz 2006). The constructivist viewpoint shifts from the question what social reality is in the perspective of actors to how actors’ everyday practice produces or accomplishes reality (i.e. the practice of action and talk, of presentation and argumentation) (Bohnsack 2010, 102).

Constructivism goes hand in hand with feminist standpoint epistemology that, according to Chafetz (2006), sees the object of knowledge as socially constructed. Being socially constructed does not mean that something is not real but, rather, that it is the product of human activity (Sprague and Kobryniewicz 2006). Constructivism thus reveals the ‘natural’ in what may be ‘commonly regarded as self-evident and natural’ is socially constructed (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2009, 35). Gender is a useful example here as it is a social construction rather than a natural given. Through this lens, gender is understood in this research as a social construction, as explained in the following subsection.

Knowledge theories are embedded in particular positions, perspectives and experiences with entrenched notions of gender, race, class and ethnicity. Combining the feminist standpoint and the constructivist epistemology helps this research avoid both the trap of discovering universal and unique truths and *the danger of the single story* (Adichie 2009). This approach aids in critically exploring and analysing the complexity of the social relations and processes Albanian migrant women experience. In the context of these two epistemological lenses, this research is aimed at understanding how gender is related to migration process, particularly how the social construction of gender shapes migration and the construction of the migrant woman and how different migration processes influence gender relations.

1.1.1 A feminist and constructivist perspective on gender

This research treats gender as a social construct (i.e. it is constantly produced and reproduced through social practices and interactions and experienced through multiple social institutions, such as the family, labour market and state) (West and Fenstermaker 1995; Mahler and Pessar 2001) and as an analytical concept that enables understanding social roles, relations and processes (Sri Tharan 2010). Gender is understood as distinct from the constructed meaning of sex as a biological inevitability (Glenn 2000) and from the concept of an immutable social structure. The notion of gender refers to socially created meanings, relationships and identities organised around reproductive differences (Connell 2002; Scott 1986). Gender represents a social status and an organising principle of social institutions that extends beyond reproductive differences (Connell 2002; Lorber 2007) and is an on-going product of everyday social practice (West and Zimmerman 1987). Thus, gender is ‘much more than a role or an individual characteristic: it is a mechanism whereby situated social action contributes to the reproduction of social structure’ (West and Fenstermarker 1995, 21). This formulation highlights how gender operates to produce and maintain asymmetrical relations, inequalities in social life and systems of domination and subordination (Lutz 2010; West and Fenstermaker 1995). ‘Gender hierarchies are inscribed in the division of labour, in social representations, ascriptions, behavioural expectations and, in general, in the social status attributed to the categories of “men” and “women”’ (Höpflinger, Lavanchy and Dahinden 2012, 620).

If gender is never fixed but rather continually constituted and reconstituted, then we can look at the historical, cultural and situational variability in the definitions of womanhood and manhood, the meanings of masculinity and femininity, the relationships between and within gender categories and the extent of their relative power and political status (Glenn 2000, 3). The

constructivist feminist approach views gender not merely as an individual human production and an identity but more broadly as an organising principle of collectivities, social institutions, historical processes and social practices—including sexuality, family, education, the economy and the state (Glenn 2000, 5). From the feminist perspective, social relationships are regarded as gendered in every aspect (Sri Tharan 2010).

This point of view allows analysing how migration and gender intersect to see how constructed gender roles and the meanings of femininity and masculinity influence the migration process of women and how migration impacts gender relations and roles. The construction of the meanings of masculinity and femininity, the different meanings of private and public workplaces, the gender-specific evaluation of migration experiences and the various consequences of migration for male and female migrants as couples, singles, parents and children then become of critical interest (Lutz 2010, 1650–1651). This feminist, constructivist, relational and intersectional approach to gender enables seeing beyond the dichotomy of men and women to the asymmetrical relations among men and women, including class, race and ethnicity (Connell 2002; Parreñas 2009). This asymmetrical relation among women is shown, for example, in the case of international care chain and migrant domestic workers who enable their female employers to ‘undo’ their gendered obligations of care work (Lutz 2010, 1651).

This dissertation regards gender relations as changeable social products and processes subject to resistance as well as conformity, contestation as well as acceptance—therefore, they are open to change (Pilcher and Whelehan 2004). Gender relations are not static, and change is inherent, but the direction of change has a range of possibilities (Connell 2002). This conceptualisation of gender relations is important for this research as it allows seeing the complex entwinement of migration and gender relations while avoiding unidirectional, evolutionary conclusions (e.g. migration inherently leads to empowerment). Migration is seen as a gendered process in which the experiences of men and women reflect gender constructed representations, roles and social institutions. It, therefore, is crucial to identify and analyse the experiences of women during migratory processes and the entanglement of gender and migration.

1.2 Gender and migration

1.2.1 Migration as a process: international, internal and circulatory migration

In this dissertation, migration is understood not as a unidirectional movement but as a process that can take different forms, whether international, internal or circulatory movement. Often, international migration is defined as the movement of persons who take up residence in

foreign countries, but this definition renders invisible short-term forms of migration, such as circular migration, tourism and business travel (Morokvasic 2002, 2003), and the practices of return migration. In 2013, 232 million persons, or 3.2 per cent of the world's population, were international migrants, up from 175 million in 2000 and 154 million in 1990 (United Nations [UN] 2013). However, this figure does not include internal or circular migrants, obscuring the importance of internal population movements and other migration processes. Unfortunately, as Skeldon (2008, 31) explains, the word *migration* seems to mean only international migration, with internal movement classified as 'urbanisation' or 'population redistribution'.

Studies (Morokvasic 1984a; Tarrius 1993; Kofman 2004; Dahinden 2009, 2014; Wihtol de Wenden 2015) have shown that migration should not be considered to be a single movement but a multiplicity of movements. I, therefore, base this dissertation on such an integrative approach viewing migration as a process that includes one-way internal and international migration, return migration and combinations of internal and international, circular migratory practices. The integrative approach views migrants as social actors and agents, not as passive victims, and simultaneously takes into account the social, political and economic structures limiting their agency (Sri Tharan 2010). Analysis of internal and international migration only partly explains the migratory process of Albanian women; therefore, this dissertation also analyses circular and return migration, two migration trajectories increasingly present and visible in the Albanian migration. A migration trajectory is understood not only as physical movement but as a place of social relations and exchanges (Tarrius 1993).

My intent is to argue that the case of Albanian migration demands analysing more than the interrelations of international and internal movements with gender. Other trajectories, such as circular and return migration, are also interrelated with gender and, in most cases, entwined with each other. Transnational relations are often also part of these various migration experiences. An integrated approach to the process of migration helps improve understanding of its interrelation with gender by recognising the multitude of strategies used by women and men during migration.

1.2.1.1 International and internal migration

Scholars have already shown a significant link between internal and international migration that is very relevant to this research on the Albanian migration (Vullnetari 2012; Skeldon 2008; King, Skeldon and Vullnetari 2008). According to Ravenstein's (1885, 198) first 'law' of migration, 'the great body of our migrants only proceed a short distance' and mostly perform internal migration. Unfortunately, in most research on migration, internal migration is rarely represented, and the

relationship between internal and international migration is a ‘remarkably neglected topic’ (King, Skeldon and Vullnetari 2008, 34).

Nation-state building processes have profoundly shaped the perception and reception of migration and the development of the studies on migration (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). The literature and studies on migration have focused mainly on migration by non-citizens and made cross-national migration their primary object. Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002) opine that internal migration is approached primarily as part of urbanisation studies rather than migration. The nation-state is understood as an internally flexible but externally enclosed space, and this logic underlies the invisibility of internal migration and the taken-for-granted reference of *migration* to international migration (Brubaker 2010). Population movement within nation-states is considered to be normal, even desirable, contributing to cultural homogenisation and the smooth functioning of labour and housing markets (Brubaker 2010). ‘Cross-border migration, by contrast, appears as an anomaly, a problematic exception to the rule of people staying where they “belong”, that is, to “their” nation state. Post-war migration studies thus naturalised this belonging, moving it into the background of social science reasoning and transforming it into one of its incontestable axioms’ (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002, 311).

In this context, the role of the nation-state in shaping how migrants organise their migration process is crucial, both through the ‘creat[ion of] barriers’ via migration regimes and visa policies and through employment and labour market structures (Mazzucato 2008, 72). The logic of the nation-state and nation-state border crossing through various visa regimes lies behind the construction of illegal, undocumented and irregular migrants. ‘Irregular, illegal, undocumented, unauthorised, clandestine: all these are adjectives applied to the words “migration” and “migrants” to imply that something is “wrong” and needs to be “controlled” or “fixed”’ (King and DeBono 2013, 3). Among these numerous adjectives, I prefer the term *illegalised* to stress the political construction of the illegal or the irregular migrant. When using other adjectives in this dissertation, I always imply the political dimension behind them.

While the main difference between internal and international migration is the crossing of national borders, two other crucial differences regulate migration streams: distance and culture (Zohry 2005). King and Skeldon (2010) highlight that distance and culture often blur the distinction between internal and international migration. First, the distance between two countries might be smaller than distances within the same country. Second, cultural differences may well exist within one country, not only between countries. Furthermore, the reasons and motivations for internal and international migration are not clear cut and often overlap. For example, women may engage both in internal and international migration trajectories to escape from gender constraints in their place of

origin. However, the cost difference between international and internal migration should not be forgotten. The very act of crossing a border controlled by a state, often in illegalised ways, directly increases the costs of international migration relative to internal migration (Vullnetari 2012, 40). Crossing borders requires significant preparation involving documents and social networks (which might include not only friends and relatives but also smugglers). Thus, the higher travel costs of international migration compared to internal migration present an obstacle, especially for the poor. However, the higher costs of international migration might be compensated by expectations for higher incomes and savings in the country of destination.

An integrated approach to internal and international migration trajectories from a gender perspective does not assume that both these trajectories are the same; to the contrary, the aim is to see how gender informs migration, both internal and international. In the case of Albania, families and individuals alike use both migration processes as strategies for survival and improved wellbeing (Vullnetari 2012, 36). In Albania, it is more often the rule than the exception that members of a family have migrated internally and internationally, and very often, the same persons engage in various types of migration during their lives. Furthermore, the link between internal and international migration in Albania has significant relevance as neither migration type was allowed during the four and a half decades of communist governance, as further explained in chapter 2 on the Albanian context.

1.2.1.2 Return migration

Return migration is part of the moving process but, unfortunately, is ‘the great unwritten chapter in the history of migration’, as Russell King puts it (2000, 7). In this dissertation, the analysis of return migration is highly important as some of the participants are returned migrants. In this research, return migration is considered to be ‘the process whereby people return to their country or place of origin after a significant period in another country or region’ (King 2000, 8), defined as at least three months abroad (Kuschminder 2013). Additionally, return migration is neither permanent nor the end of the migration cycle (Ley and Kobayashi 2009; Black and King 2004; Cassarino 2013).

The neoclassical and new economics of labour theories explain that financial and economic factors determine the motivations for return. These theories view migration in the context of economic development processes and emphasise the economic logic of migratory decisions at the macro and micro levels but do not consider how the social, economic and political environments of the home country may affect the return experience (Cassarino 2004; Lang et. al 2016). Structuralist theory makes up for this shortcoming. The structuralist approach expands research to investigate

more explanatory variables, particularly the structural elements that frame migratory decisions, such as the political, economic, demographic and social situations in both the origin and the possible destination country (Lang et al. 2016).

Social network theories and transnational approaches concerned with the maintenance of migratory processes are quite relevant to the analysis of return migration (Lang et al. 2016). These approaches focus on how the sustained links between receiving and sending countries enable migrants to return at a point when enough financial and non-financial resources are mobilised and when conditions in the home country are favourable (Cassarino 2004). In social network theory, embeddedness in transnational social networks is a crucial factor in successful reintegration upon return. Additionally, institutionalised networks can play an important role and contribute significantly to resolving any bureaucratic problems that might arise during return migration, such as labour market integration, housing and schooling. A transnational conceptualisation of return migration views it as part of an on-going itinerary, not a permanent move detached from earlier migratory experiences. Return migration should be seen not as the end of a process but as another stage in a continuing itinerary (Ley and Kobayashi 2009).

This dissertation draws upon social network theory and transnational approach in research on return migration. Return migration is conceptualised as not solely an economic endeavour but also a socio-cultural process driven by a mix of economic, social, cultural and gendered motives. Return migration decisions do not constitute purely rational, individual decisions but, moreover, are socially constituted decisions made within a household, a family and a wider cultural context (Lang et al. 2016). Returnees differ significantly in their return motivation, and often their reasons overlap and are ambivalent (Sri Tharan 2010). Like other phases of the migration process, return migration can hardly be explained by a single motivation (Castles and Miller 1998). Furthermore, the factor of gender influences return decisions, as well as the readjustment process. Female migrants have different return experiences that, for example, range from everyday experiences to entry into a male-dominated labour market in the home country (Sondhi and King 2017; King and Kiliç 2016).

The readjustment process is complex and varies by migrants' experience and agency and by institutional, political and economic conditions. Return migrants often engage in other migratory processes, making return not a permanent settling (Cassarino 2004; Black and King 2004). Return does not constitute the end of the migration cycle as it is part of a circular system of social and economic relationships and exchanges facilitating the reintegration of migrants and transmitting knowledge, information and membership (Cassarino 2004; Ley and Kobayashi 2009). Return migration is not a sufficient description of the multiplicity of the current movement trajectories. The life cycle of return migrants has a constant openness to further movement during distinctive phases

(Ley and Kobayashi 2009). Thus, the concept of permanent return is becoming less relevant for various reasons, including the failure of a sustainable return. In addition, migrants keep themselves mobile to maintain their international professional and social networks, thus engaging in circulatory practices (Black and King 2004).

The multiplicity of reasons and motivations to return and to not consider return migration to be the end of the migratory process enables better analysis of the migratory process of Albanian migrant women. Furthermore, the feminist constructivist perspective enables examining return migration starting from the experiences of migrants to identify the various reasons and motivations for return that go beyond simple economic and financial considerations and to explore their experiences in Albania after returning. This approach permits seeing how gender influences both the readjustment process and return reasons.

1.2.1.3 Circulatory migration

As mentioned at the beginning of this subsection, this dissertation approaches migration as a process with multiple trajectories, including circular migration. In this study, circular migration is defined as temporary, repeated international migration for reasons such as economic, education, family and legal issues (e.g. the residency permit regulations in a destination country). Beyond binary movement between the country of origin and the country of destination, circular migration may also include multiple movements in various countries (Cassarino 2013; Triandafyllidou 2013).

The visibility of this pattern in studies on migration has grown (Morokvasic 2003; Dahinden 2010; Triandafyllidou 2013; Duany 2002; Parreñas 2010). The concept of circular migration is essential to understanding migration as a process and not as a unilinear movement in which settling in the destination country demands all the attention. As Morokvasic (2003, 113) emphasises, ‘migration processes can take many forms and do not necessarily lead to settlement—integration and assimilation in only one place’. Circular migration demonstrates the complexity of migratory processes as migrants ‘settl[e] in mobility’ (Morokvasic 2003; Dahinden 2010) rather than a single destination country.

Another pattern of circular movement is what Morokvasic (2003) calls pendular migration, or trans-border and short-term movements, regular and undocumented, for the purpose of work and trade. In this back-and-forth movement, the migrant spends several months per year in each country (Fokkema, Cela and Witter 2016). This migration process entails a lifestyle of leaving home and going away and, paradoxically, a strategy of staying at home and an alternative to emigration. In this sense, Tarrius (1993) speaks of the new nomads who, by creating circular territories (*territoires*

circulatoires), simultaneously belong here and there. This type of migration again emphasises the inadequacy of unilinear or permanent settling frameworks of migration.

Circular migration arises from individual and structural reasons in both the country of origin and the country of destination. First, the capital related to adequate visa regimes is an element in circular migration. The possibility of complying with visa regimes and border-crossing policies and possessing residency permits in a foreign country increases engagement in circular migration, as highlighted in the case of Albanian migration in Italy (Mai and Paladini 2013). Nevertheless, when given the impossibility of free movement, people often engage in pendular migration with a neighbour country by crossing the borders in illegalised ways. Such an example is found in the Albanian migrants who split the year between Greece and Albania, crossing the borders in illegalised ways (Maroukis and Gemi 2011; Gemi et al. 2010). Another case of in circular migration is short-term work permits, also called ‘temporal segregation’ by Parreñas (2010, 312) to describe Filipino female entertainers in Japan. Moreover, Parreñas (2010, 304) explains that circular migrants may not fit the transnational migrant figure who, according to Basch, Schiller and Blanc (1994), balances allegiance to both home and host society. Analysing the case of Filipino entertainers in Japan, Parreñas (2010) finds that these circular migrants maintain stronger relations with the sending countries.

Second, Mai and Paladini (2013) show that circular migration may be related to conditions in both the sending and the destination country (e.g. adaptation difficulties and marginalisation in the destination country and a lack of economic security and detachment from cultural practices in the country of origin). Parreñas (2010, 320), therefore, suggests that research should look ‘not at the extent of migrants’ integration but instead at their segregation in the host society’. Additionally, she stresses the need for more research from the perspective of sending countries to identify the intertwinement of return and circular migration and the reasons and conditions for the frequent engagement of return migrants in further circular migratory practices.

Third, the proximity of countries is significant in circular, primarily pendular, migration, allowing migrants to follow pendular trajectories between two countries. The main reason for this pattern is to work but not settle in a neighbouring country (Morokvasic 2003). Women, in particular, have high engagement in circular migration. Their involvement in this process shaped by gender is driven by their mother role, gender representations and the division of household labour. Under constructed gender roles that cast men as breadwinners and women as caregivers, circular migration appears to optimise the opportunities and minimise the obstacles to women’s reproductive and productive work by combining them (Dahinden 2010; Morokvasic 2003). Schmoll (2006, 10) provides a similar account of Tunisian circular migrants to Italy who gain an opportunity to migrate

and support their families while ‘reduc[ing] the social and family costs that would be generated by the neglect of their family responsibilities’.

1.2.1.4 Transnationalism

The brief preceding presentation of return and circular migration stresses that migration should be viewed as more than a simple, linear, unidirectional movement and that migrants are increasingly able to construct their lives across borders, creating economic, social, political and cultural activities that allow them to maintain membership in both their destination and their home countries. Migrants can hardly be considered to be uprooted from their home countries as they simultaneously maintain multiple linkages to their homelands, bringing together their societies of origin and settlement (Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton 1992). This brings us to the concept of transnationalism, defined by Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton (1992, 1) as ‘the process by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement’. The notion of transnationalism has become fundamental to understanding the contemporary practices taking place across national borders. Especially when speaking of migration (Dahinden 2010b), transnationalism challenges the assumed linearity of the migration process as a one-way journey and acknowledges the ‘fluid relationships between two or more countries’ (Zontini 2004, 1114).

Transnationalism, which emerged as a new approach in the 1990s, ‘accents the attachments migrants maintain to families, communities, traditions and causes outside the boundaries of the nation-state to which they have moved’ (Vertovec 2001, 574). As stressed by Faist (2010, 12), the transnational turn in the early 1990s brought migrants ‘back in’ as important social agents. Transnationalism has come to connote migrants’ everyday practices in various activities, including, to give only a few examples, cross-border small-scale entrepreneurship, reciprocity and solidarity within kinship networks, political participation in the countries of both emigration and immigration and the transfer and re-transfer of cultural customs and practices (Faist 2010).

An issue of interest in this dissertation is migrants’ two-fold transnational relations with their home country and with their destination country after return (Dahinden 2010a; Black and King 2004). Transnational linkages have been often viewed from only one perspective: migrants’ relationships to their home countries. However, as Dahinden (2010a) argues, analysing these linkages from a different perspective—transnational relations and their role after migrants’ return—is also very fruitful. As mentioned, scholars have analysed return not as the end of a move but as a new phase in the migratory process that often involves maintenance of transnational relations with

the destination country (Dahinden 2010a; Black and King 2004). Dahinden (2010a) reveals that returnees' transnational networks remain highly relevant, both emotionally and economically, and have concrete effects on the lives of the return migrants. For instance, returned Albanian women in Kosovo develop a kind of 'transnational belonging', identifying with a European 'femininity' in contrast to the 'traditional Albanian woman' (Dahinden 2010a, 143, 144). Another point of interest is women's engagement in transnational families and transnational mothering (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997; Hochschild 2000; Parreñas 2000; Zontini 2004; Vianello 2009), which highlights the shifting gender relations and caring roles within transnational networks.

Finally, transnational practices and formations do not develop independently of the constraints and opportunities imposed by specific contexts (Dahinden 2010b). Who migrates and where they migrate are shaped by the social, economic, political and legal contexts in the home and the destination countries; in particular, immigration policies are a significant factor in mobility (Dahinden 2010b; Mazzucato 2008). As mentioned (section 1.2.1.2), nation-state barriers, such as migration regimes and labour market structures, remain crucial influences on migration. As Dahinden (2017, 1481) contends, 'nation-states may be losing sovereignty with regard to their ability to regulate socio-economic realities in general, but when it comes to migration issues, the nation state, its institutions and its inherent logic remain strong, impacting and shaping transnational fields in multiple ways'.

1.2.1.5 Possible connections between internal, international, circular and return migration

An integrated approach to internal, international, circular and return migration does not merge them into one but highlights their links to understand them. Important research on the linkage between international and internal migration has already been undertaken (King, Skeldon and Vullnetari 2008; Vullnetari 2012; Skeldon 2008; Zohry 2005; Varrel 2011; Singh and Roy 2015; King and Skeldon 2010). The two main conclusions regarding the link between these two processes are that internal migration may lead to international migration and that international migration may result in internal migration. First, regarding the conclusion that internal movement may lead to international migration, people first move to the big cities in their country of origin to be closer to opportunities to go abroad. They acquire knowledge, networks and financial resources and then engage in international migration. Studies in eastern Uttar Pradesh in India (Singh and Roy 2015) and Mexico (Lozano-Ascencio, Roberts and Frank 1997) have found similar patterns.

Second, regarding the conclusion that international migration may lead to internal migration, those who engage in direct international migration might move again internally within the country of

destination or the country of origin upon return (Vullnetari 2012). Illustrations of this pattern can be found in the case of migration to African cities as international migrants send remittances to allow their families to move internally (Bakewell and Jónsson 2011) or the case of Indian information-technology professionals who return to Bangalore instead of their place of origin (Varrel 2011). The links between internal and international migration are complex as migrants might move first internally, then internationally and then upon return move internally again, as observed to occur in Mexico (Lozano-Ascencio, Roberts and Frank 1997) and various countries in Africa (Bakewell and Jónsson 2011).

These major patterns include many other nuanced linkages that further vary by level of analysis, whether individual or family (King, Skeldon and Vullnetari 2008). Focusing only on the relationship between internal and international migration does not fully explain the trajectories of Albanian migrant women that I want to grasp, as similarly emphasised by King, Skeldon and Vullnetari (2008) and Vullnetari (2012) when analysing Albanian migration. I, therefore, suggest also including return and circular migration as well as transnational relations. Scholars such as King and Skeldon (2010) and Vullnetari (2012) provide a framework of the link between internal and international migration that allows incorporating circular and return migration. Starting from the diagram of migration pathways (King and Skeldon 2010, 1622; King, Skeldon and Vullnetari 2008, 64), I present cases of the links among various migratory trajectories that represent the experiences of my interviewees.

At the family level, several cases of the interrelation between various types of migration may be highlighted. First, one (or more) family member migrates internationally, and the rest of the family migrates internally. The family may migrate internally at the same time as or after the international migrant has provided financial support for the internal move. This may be followed by the return and the circular migration of the international migrant. Second, parents and children move first internally, and next, children move internationally. This movement may be followed first by the return of the child to another internal destination and circular migration by the child. A third pattern consists of the internal migration of the entire family, followed by the international migration of the whole family, and finally the return of only the parents while the children remain abroad.

In other cases, the family first moves internationally and then returns to a location other than their city or village of origin (King, Skeldon and Vullnetari, 2008). This fourth pattern may be split into two variations. First, only one family member moves internationally, then is joined by the rest of the family, and afterwards, the family returns to an internal location in Albania other than their city or village of origin. Second, one family member engages in international circular movement, and after a certain period, the entire family moves to an internal location. A fifth pattern

is international migration to join a spouse, after some time followed by return to a different internal location in the country of origin while the spouse remains abroad.

Patterns of the links between various types of migration at the individual level are also complex, and I mention only those pertinent to my research. First is internal migration, followed by international movement and then return migration that may include transnational relations with the country of destination. Second, the individual moves internationally first and, after returning, migrates internally. Third is international migration, followed by internal migration upon return and then circular migration and transnational relations (Mai and Paladini 2013).

The interrelations among various types of migration reflect the multiple and overlapping motivations arising from individual and structural/institutional conditions. The links at the family and the individual levels reflect constructed gender roles and relations. Gender shapes the entire process of migration at both the family and the individual levels.

The intersections of internal, international, return and circular migratory practices are very useful for analysing the experiences of the women participants in this research and reveal the complexity of their migration processes. This approach is crucial as Albanian migration has very often been seen only as internal or international, obscuring other migratory practices (with the exception of a few authors such as Vullnetari 2012; Mai and Paladini 2013; Maroukis and Gemi 2011; Labrianidis and Hatziprokopiou 2010). Moreover, existing research does not focus sufficiently on the experiences of migrant women.

My aim in this dissertation, therefore, is to explore the migratory experiences of Albanian women without limiting migration to a one-way movement but viewing it as including various paths.

1.2.2 Gender in migration studies

‘Woman is a greater migrant than man’.

Ravenstein 1885, 196

This research is based on premise that migration patterns and processes, migrants’ experiences and the social, political, economic and cultural impacts of migration are gendered, and at the same time, migration influences gender relations (Erel, Morokvasic and Shinozaki 2003) in various social institutions. Today, many scholars in different parts of the world have extensively studied the intertwinement of migration and gender. Indeed, what is counted to be the first pioneering work on the importance of migrant women was published in 1885. Social geographer Ernest Ravenstein proposed *The Laws of Migration* and clearly stated that women are greater migrants

than men, despite the prevailing view associating women with 'domestic life' (1885, 196). He also explained how women are more engaged in short-distance migration to 'some other county of the same kingdom', whereas men more often migrate to another 'kingdom' (Ravenstein 1885, 197).

After this study was the first to discuss women's participation in migration processes, the issue was not analysed again until 1984. In a special edition of *International Migration Journal*, Mirjana Morokvasic (1984) criticised the persistent male bias in migration studies. Until this moment, studies on migration had been blind to gender differences as the prototype migrant was considered to be male as analysed by Dahinden et al. (2007), Donato et al. (2006), Lutz (2010). These scholars examine how classical theories of migration started from the idea that migration is triggered mostly by economic reasons, and economic activity is primarily associated with men; consequently, women were assumed to not migrate.

The invisibility of women drove a first stream of compensatory studies with the simple aim to add women to the study of migration, as stressed by Lutz (2010). Women were considered to be passive subjects in the process of migration, primarily as the traditional model of the western family cast women migrants in dependent roles. Thus, migrant women were seen only as wives and daughters following their husbands or fathers and exercising no agency in the process of migration. Women might have charge of the domestic sphere and the children's education but depended on men as the primary providers of resources in the household. These compensatory studies, however, failed to interrelate gender and migration and to analyse migration from a gender perspective (Lutz 2010). Gendering migration does not mean merely acknowledging women where they are missing. It moreover entails looking at migration processes and discourses that involve women, men, their relationships to one another and the relations among women, showing that the patterns, causes, experiences and social impacts of migration are gendered (Erel, Morokvasic and Shinozaki 2003; Parreñas 2009).

Several research paradigms proved useful for this research. First, a critical development in migration studies is the practice, mostly by feminist scholars, of analysis that permits envisaging women as actors and protagonists in migration. In contrast to the image of women migrants as passive, dependent subjects, scholars have shown that women migrate on their own to help their families economically (Vianello 2009; Schmoll 2006; Parreñas 2000; Oso Casas 2006; Dahinden et al. 2007; Dahinden 2010; Erel, Morokvasic and Shinozaki 2003). To investigate the agency of migrant women, scholars have applied the concepts of *tactics* (De Certeau 1984) in migration studies (Schmoll 2005; Kihato 2009; Vullnetari and King 2015; Lévy 2015). Kihato (2009) reports that women employ certain tactics to engage with dominant structures, and their practices sometimes challenge

these dominant structures (e.g. the family, labour market and community), allowing women to escape the dominant order without leaving it.

Scholarly attention thus has shifted from the male individual to the family and social networks (Boyd 1989). Research on gender and migration now considers the consequences of the migration process not only for migrants themselves but also for their family members and views migration decisions as the result of negotiation between various peoples (Dahinden et al. 2007). This shift constitutes a second significant development for my dissertation.

A third development relevant to the framework of the dissertation is the introduction of an intersectional approach to migration studies. Amid socio-economic and political changes in recent years, the analysis of migration has expanded to include the intersection of gender with class, race and other factors (Dahinden 2010; Silvey 2004). These recent changes have seen increased participation by women in paid, productive work in northern countries and simultaneous shrinking and restructuring of the welfare state. These developments have led to higher demand for migrant women among domestic and care workers. The growing numbers and geographical variety of domestic care and work migrants have been widely analysed in gender and migration studies. Research on global care chains (Hochschild 2000a) and the international division of reproductive labour (Parreñas 2000) has elaborated the relationship between gender and migration.

A typical global care chain might work something like this: An older daughter from a poor family in a third world country cares for her siblings (the first link in the chain) while her mother works as a nanny caring for the children of a nanny migrating to a first world country (the second link) who, in turn, cares for the child of a family in a rich country (the final link). Each kind of chain expresses an invisible human ecology of care, one care worker depending on another and so on. A global care chain might start in a poor country and end in a rich one, or might link rural and urban areas within the same poor country. More complex versions start in one poor country and extend to another slightly less poor country and then link to a rich country. (Hochschild 2000a, 33)

These complex care chains reveal the intertwinement of political and economic changes at the national and global levels with the gendered constructed roles of women as caregivers. This international division of reproductive labour also is visible in the Southern Europe as migrants from former socialist countries (Vianello 2009; Lyberaki 2008; Vaiou 2002) fill the care gaps left by women engaged in paid work. The international division of reproductive labour also highlight rising social inequalities among women themselves and contradictory patterns of mobility (Parreñas 2001).

A fourth useful frame for this research comes from gender and migration studies that break from the unidirectional conception of migration. The transformation of the former Communist Bloc states has led to new migration processes enabling increased mobility by women from these countries (Morokvasic 2003; Dahinden 2010). Analysis of these migration flows illustrates the diverse characteristics of migration that demand reconsideration of conventional models. As mentioned, Morokvasic (2003) describes the situation of Eastern Europe women involved in circular migration as pendular migration. Dahinden (2010) gives another illustration of pendular/circular migration in a study of cabaret dancers in Switzerland who mostly come from former socialist countries in Eastern Europe.

Fifthly, I rely on studies showing that migrant women do not move only for economic reasons and do not take only low-skilled jobs. Very complex mixtures of economic and non-economic reasons lead women to emigrate (Morokvasic 1984; Vianello 2009; Kihato 2009; Riaño and Baghdadi 2007; Gjermani 2004). Migration permits escape from the dominant gender constraints and patriarchal practices and customs in the country of origin (Morokvasic 1984; Kihato 2009; Vianello 2009). Furthermore, the profile of the migrant is no longer the poor or less-skilled woman (and man). Studies on migration have shown that both women and men migrants may be highly skilled and migrate in search of better-paid jobs and career opportunities (Kofman 2000a; Kofman and Raghuram 2009, 2015).

Finally, when considering migration as a process, return migration emerges as a distinct, gendered phase. Although gender affects the reasons for returning and the post-return experience (Vianello 2011; Sri Tharan 2010), research analysing gender and return migration is lacking (Sri Tharan 2010). Studies on gender and migration concentrate on the reasons and ways of migration and on the receiving countries, but very little research has been done on their experiences of women after they return to their country of origin. Research has not considered the effects of migration on their positions, roles, being, well-being, everyday life and relationships with their families, households and community (Sri Tharan 2010).

The analytical perspective on gender and migration applied in this research draws on Boyd and Grieco's (2003) model of the relationship between migration and gender. They outline an analysis that follows the migration process through the pre-migration stage, the transition across state borders and the experiences in the receiving country. This model serves as a basic frame upon which I construct an appropriate analytical framework for my research. Boyd and Grieco (2003) suggest that a gender-sensitive analysis should break down all the major stages of the process. First is pre-migration, which involves consideration of the factors that encourage or discourage individuals from migrating. These factors include gender relations and hierarchies, status and roles (e.g. single,

wife, daughter or mother) and the structural characteristics of the country of origin (e.g. labour market conditions, geographical location and migration policies).

After the pre-migration phase, the second stage of border-crossing may differ for women and men migrants (e.g. the risky ways of crossing borders are associated more with masculinity and male migrants (King and Vullnetari 2012). In particular cases, men are more likely to migrate, while in other cases, women may be the ones to leave (Boyd and Grieco 2003). The decision to relocate is not the same as securing permission to exit or to enter a particular country, and the policies of nation-states make them the principal actors in the gendered international migration process (e.g. these policies may ascribe a dependent migrant status to women and an independent migrant status to men). The role of networks is also important in this phase and influences the migration of men and women differently.

In the third post-migration stage, men and women may be treated differently and have different experiences during settlement in the receiving country due to various factors. These range from entry status that often discriminates against women considered to be dependents to family and network relationships, race, ethnicity, educational level and age. 'Racial, birthplace, and gender-based hierarchies that exist in countries of destination are important and influence the incorporation of women and men migrants into the labour market. Women may have different experiences than men because they are frequently segregated into traditional[ly] "female" occupations, such as domestic work, childcare, or garment manufacturing' (Boyd and Grieco 2003, 5).

The choice of this analytical model rests on two critical issues. First, I analyse international and internal migration, while Boyd and Grieco (2003) consider only international migration. It is true that the second stage of border-crossing is not the same in these two types of migration. However, even moving from a village or a small town to a big city entails gendered dynamics, as I explain in the analysis. Second, Boyd and Grieco call the third stage the post-migration stage. I opt to change this name as I believe that it is difficult to decide when the migration process ends, as noted by other scholars (Black and King 2004; Dahinden 2010; Morokvasic 2003; Cassarino 2004). As Morokvasic (2002, 16) states, migration processes encompass a myriad of patterns and do not necessarily lead to settlement and integration in only one place. Given that my research is based on the experiences of women living in Tirana after various migratory processes, I call the third phase 'life in Tirana' and consider it to be only a phase that might be followed further by another migratory process that could not be fully grasped at the moment of the interview. However, Boyd and Grieco's (2003) schema proves to be useful to better structure and analyse the narratives about the interviewees' migratory experiences and to incorporate the multiple factors influencing the interrelation between gender and migration processes in the analysis.

Instead of summarising this section, I would like to reemphasise that this dissertation is based on the concept of migration as a gendered process. The intersection of gender and migration goes beyond the dichotomous evolutionist perspective of tradition/modernity associated with the place of origin and the place of destination, respectively. This intersection is not so simple because migration does not automatically move women from subordination to liberation (Dahinden et al. 2007; Parreñas 2009; Vianello 2009; Oso Casas 2004). ‘Crossing borders can be empowering, and established gender norms may be challenged. However, it can also lead to new dependencies and reinforce existing gender boundaries and hierarchies’ (Morokvasic 2008, 2).

The empowerment and the agency of migrant women are enhanced and displayed not only in the place of destination but also in the location of origin. Women manifest already their agency in the very act of engaging in migratory projects (Moujoud 2008; Erel 2009; Lévy 2015). Empowerment is a process not a single move from point A to point B, which makes it difficult to jump to simplistic conclusions regarding whether migration empowers. I, therefore, briefly present the concept of empowerment (Kabeer 1999) adopted in this research and the concepts of tactics and strategies (De Certeau 1984). These aid understanding the experiences of women during migration and the empowering dimension of migration (or lack thereof).

1.2.3 Agency and tactics

In this research, I embrace a feminist standpoint and attempt to avoid the trap of victimising women engaged in migratory processes while identifying and highlighting the gender constraints and inequalities they face. To do so, I use Kabeer’s (1999) concept of empowerment as an on-going process. Kabeer (1999) defines women’s empowerment as the process by which those denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire that ability. This conceptualisation by Kabeer (1999) implies the use of resources and give space for agency throughout the process of empowerment. Kabeer (1999) also suggests the employment of everyday discursive alternatives and practices (similar to De Certeau’s [1984] tactics) that enable women to act in spaces they do not own but can use for their own goals.

For Kabeer (1999), the process of empowerment involves three interrelated dimensions: resources (pre-conditions), agency (process) and achievements (outcomes). Resources include material resources and various human and social resources that increase the ability to exercise choice. Resources, in this broad sense, are acquired through numerous social fields and relationships conducted in the various institutional domains that make up society (e.g. the family, market and community). In this context, Giddens (1979) speaks of authoritative resources, or the ability to

define and enforce claims that gives certain actors (e.g. head of the household [Kabeer 1999]) authority over others in determining the principles of distribution and exchange. Another factor in the empowerment process is the availability of discursive resources, or the ability to imagine at least the possibility of choosing differently. This ability 'is crucial to the emergence of a critical consciousness, the process by which people move from a position of unquestioning acceptance of the social order to a critical perspective on it' (Kabeer 1999, 441).

Agency is the ability to define one's own goals and act upon them. More than an observable action, agency entails the meaning, motivation and purpose that individuals bring to their activities. More importantly, agency is a form of bargaining and negotiation, deception and manipulation and subversion and resistance, as well as the cognitive processes of reflection and analysis (Kabeer 1999, 438). This conceptualisation views agency as more than straightforward decision making and allows in-depth analysis of women's experiences and actions, one of the main reasons for the selection of this concept.

The view of empowerment as a process gives rise to difficulties measuring it with purely statistical measures. Kabeer (1999) shows that renegotiation of power relations, especially within the family, often involves changes in informal decision-making. Women often choose not to violate gender relations but prefer private forms of empowerment which keep intact the public image of traditional decision making within the family even as the women's backstage influence in decision-making processes increases (Kabeer 1999). By choosing to act cautiously in situations where they may have as much to lose as gain from the disruption of social relationships, women show their agency.

Achievements in the process of empowerment, as said by Kabeer (1999), therefore, have a two-fold nature: they might have the potential to challenge and destabilise social inequalities or might merely express and reproduce those disparities. These nuances in the process of empowerment are related to various individual and structural contexts. Empowerment also entails an interdependence between individual and structure, similarly to Giddens' (1984) theorisation of structure and agency as not opposed but dynamically related. Individual and structural change are interdependent in the process of empowerment (Kabeer 1999, 461). Agency is 'exercised within the "gendered structures of constraint": the limits imposed by the structural distribution of rules, norms, resources and responsibilities that served to position different groups of women and men within the broader social hierarchies of their societies' (Kabeer et al. 2013, 3).

Highlighting the link between agency and structure, De Certeau (1984) explains that they are always in an interrelationship whose outcome depends on the specific context. Discussing the tactics and strategies used by individuals to achieve their goals, De Certeau (1984, 37) labels tactics 'the art

of the weak' who move in hostile terrains. Tactics operate within the established systems and cannot effect significant change in the dominant relations (De Certeau 1984; De Certeau, Jameson and Lovitt 1980). This concept is useful to identify and understand the agency of women even in situations when the outcome is not a change of the dominant structure or order (as also mentioned by Kabeer 1999). This perspective helps avoid the trap of victimising women and precluding their agency.

De Certeau (1984, 37) describes the practice of tactics by those in subordinated positions and context dominated by others: 'A tactic is calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus. The space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus, it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organised by the law of a foreign power'. Nevertheless, through the use of tactics, which often take the form of everyday practices, one succeeds in manipulating events and turning them into opportunities. The other employs tactics without taking over the whole space but nevertheless turning situations to one's advantage. De Certeau's (1984) concept of tactics enables understanding the process of empowerment (Kabeer 1999) and identifying the nuances that are sometimes not obvious. Tactics also permit uncovering women's agency in everyday life, as discussed in the aforementioned analyses of migrant women. Importantly, the use of the concept of tactics, 'the art of the weak', privileges women's voices and experiences, in line with the feminist standpoint epistemology used in this research. The concept of empowerment developed by Kabeer (1999) and the concepts of tactics and strategies laid out by De Certeau (1984) complement each other and give the researcher more space for analysing women's experiences.

1.3 Conclusion

To conclude, first, I restate that this research is based on the feminist and constructivist epistemology. In this framework, I focus on migrant women's experiences and view gender as a social construction and an organising principle of society. Second, the dissertation adopts the concept of migration as a gendered process that can take the forms of international, internal and circulatory movements. The experiences of men and women reflect gendered, constructed representations and roles and social institutions. This dissertation, therefore, is based on an integrative perspective of various migration processes that help identify the multiple migration trajectories of Albanian migrant women and the interrelation with gender.

Third, this dissertation does not view migrants as passive subjects or migration as an automatic elevation of women from subordination to empowerment. The interrelation between migration and gender is more complex and depends on individual and structural factors. The

analysis of this interrelation requires looking at the processes and discourses in migration that involve women, men, their relations to one another and the relations among women. This perspective reveals that the patterns, causes, experiences and social impacts of migration are gendered.

The theoretical framework comprises two related concepts that enable investigating and understanding the experiences of migrant women in Albania: empowerment as a process of change (Kabeer 1999) and the tactics of everyday life (De Certeau 1984) used to turn situations to one's advantage. The importance of these concepts is linked to their usefulness in grasping the agency of women during the process of migration.

In the following chapter, I describe more detailed patterns of internal, international, circular and return migration to Albania. I also introduce the situation of women in Albania before and during the communist regime and in the present day.

Chapter 2: Albanian Context

The aim of this chapter is to present the migration framework and the situation of women in Albania. This information, along with the theoretical approaches, helps situate my analysis. The first section briefly reviews the socio-economic condition of Albania during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, which I separate into two main periods: before and after 1991. I take the year 1991 as the official end of the mono-party political system, also known as the communist era or regime, when the country's first multiparty elections were held. It is explained how in this context, migration became one of the main forces transforming society. The second section of this chapter focuses on the history of migration in Albania, limited to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The main patterns before, during and after the communist period are highlighted, and the main research site, the city of Tirana, is also discussed. The third section presents the situation of women in Albania, focusing on some central matters that support the analysis in this research.

2.1. Albania: some historical markers

The scope of this chapter precludes exploring the history of Albania in detail. However, it is necessary to highlight some turning points and general circumstances to understand the issue of migration in Albania.

2.1.1 Pre-1991 period—a country torn by wars and isolation

Albania became an independent state on 28 November 1912 under a provisional government. However, after independence, political instability and a severe social and economic situation (Keefe et al. 1971) gripped Albania, the neighbouring Balkan countries and beyond. Before World War II, Albania had practically no industry, and its agriculture system was poorly developed. The transportation system had been built mostly by wartime occupiers: 400 miles of strategic road were constructed by Austrian forces during the World War I, and the Italian military did the same during WWII (Keefe et al. 1971, 45). On 29 November 1944, the country was liberated from the Nazi–Fascist occupation that had started 7 April 1939. The Communist Party, founded on 8 November 1941, led the Antifascist National Liberation War and consequently came to power after the liberation (Keefe et al. 1971). The establishment of a socialist state regime via a war of liberation from occupation by Fascist Italy put Albanian on a different trajectory than the other socialist

countries, except for the former Yugoslavia, with which Albania maintained close ties in the early post-WWII era (Ramet and Wagner 2010).

The new regime, which called itself a ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ (Keefe et al. 1971, 1) formed a one-party system. International migration was banned (unlike in the neighbouring former Yugoslavia) (Bonifazi and Manolo 2004), and the state controlled the internal migration of the population through an internal passport system, explained later in this chapter. Any opposition to the party, first the Communist Party and then the Albanian Party of Labour, was forbidden. The state controlled all the media and information sources, and religion was banned from 1969 until 1991 (Keefe et al. 1971; Woodcock 2016).

Similar to the other countries in the region and beyond, Albania entered the post-WWII era with very adverse economic and infrastructure conditions in need of reconstruction. Along with the country’s political framework, the communist government also established its economic structure based on two main pillars: agrarian reform (particularly, the collectivisation of land into cooperatives) and nationalisation of industry. Launched in 1945, the agrarian reform redistributed all privately-owned land exceeding certain limits to landless peasants (Vickers 1999). Regarding industrialisation, Albania adopted the Stalinist model of a strongly centralised economy with an emphasis on self-sufficiency in heavy industry (Vickers 1999, 176), similar to Romania, which underwent the same strict post-1944 reforms (Stan 2010). The constitution of 1976 banned all private ownership of land and immovable property (Çaro 2011). Two significant achievements during this period were electrification of the country and infrastructure construction and improvement. Until the mid-1970s, the Albanian government succeeded in industrialising the economy and increasing the per capita income at an average rate of more than 8.2 per cent a year (Gjonca, Aasve and Mencarini 2008). By 1985, the ‘relatively modern’ multi-branched industrial sector generated 43.3 per cent of the total national income (Gjonca, Aasve and Mencarini 2008, 262).

Economic improvement spurred the development of the national social and health care systems, including services and infrastructure intended to cover the entire country. In the immediate aftermath of WWII, life expectancy at birth was no more than 50 years for both sexes. Infant mortality was the highest in the region, at 148 infant deaths per 1,000 live births, exceeding the rate in any neighbouring Balkan country, including Greece, Yugoslavia, Romania and Bulgaria (Gjonca, Aasve and Mencarini 2008, 263). However, by the end of the 1990s, life expectancy at birth had improved to 70.7 years, and the infant mortality rate had fallen to 45.4 deaths per 1000 live births (Gjonca, Aasve and Mencarini 2008, 263).

Countrywide literacy campaigns and the improvement of the educational system eliminated illiteracy among those younger than 40 years old by the early 1970s, and by 1989, the illiteracy rate was less than 8 per cent (INSTAT 2004). Some achievements of the communist regime may be summarised as follows: it diversified the economy and society through five-year industrialisation plans, 'raised the standard of living, reduced the impact of divisive factors on Albanian society, such as regional and clan loyalties, the traditional north-south division' (Fischer 2010, 421). However, despite the economic progress made during the early decades, a very harsh economic situation took root in the last years of the communist regime. The difficult economic situation was greatly worsened after the communist government of Albania broke off all relations with the Communist Bloc, ending relations with the Soviet Union in 1961 and with China in 1978. Albania implemented a strategy of complete self-reliance (Çaro 2011), deepening its isolation. Albania emerged from the communist regime as the poorest country in Europe, with a gross national product per capita of approximately US\$380 (Gjonca, Aasve and Mencarini 2008, World Bank 1996).

On the political level, after breaking with Yugoslavia, Albania allied with the Soviet Union beginning in 1948 but broke that alliance, too, in 1961, when Enver Hoxha, First Secretary of the Party of Labour and head of state of Albania from 1944 to 1985, expelled Soviet advisers and aligned the country with China. After China ceased sending aid in 1978, Albania, like Romania under Nicolae Ceausescu, entered a period of economic recession and severe isolation from not only the Soviet Union but also other East European countries. While civil society grew and put pressure on the communist government in other countries such as Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland, no such developments occurred in either Albania or Romania. Instead, signs of opposition and dissidence were rapidly suppressed (Ramet and Wagner 2010; Fischer 2010; Woodcock 2016). The communist regime in Albania has been criticised as very harsh, like Ceausescu's regime in Romania, ignoring human rights, controlling the population through the secret police and crushing any opposition or dissidence (Stan 2010). Fischer (2010, 421) points to some of the most brutal aspects of the communist regime in Albania: 'its state-of-siege isolation, its political murders, its prisons, its forced labour camps, and the hardships of long internal exile'. Together with the deep poverty, these features help to better understand the situation and the social, economic and political turmoil in Albania after the fall of the regime, as well as the high numbers of international and internal migration in the early 1990s.

2.1.2 Post-1991—a continuous transition

The communist regime in Albania fell in 1991 in a wave of revolutions in Eastern Europe. The fall of communism in Albania was different than in, for instance, Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, where socialism was ended from above. Albania also differed from the violent popular riots of Romania and the execution of Ceausescu (Ramet and Wagner 2010). In Albania, the ‘collapse’ (Ramet and Wagner 2010, 18) of the communist regime started in 1990 and was completed in 1992 with the electoral victory of the anti-communist opposition party, founded in December 1990.

In the early 1990s, Albania was the poorest country in Europe, and a difficult economic situation accompanied the troubled political situation in 1990, 1991 and 1992 (Vullnetari 2012; Gëdeshi and Jorgoni 2012). In the context of these years, Albania experienced the beginning of international and internal migration processes. These years saw the so-called ‘boat exodus’ to Italy and the ‘mass migration’ to Greece (Vullnetari 2007, 32) along the pathways through the southern mountains.

Law and order broke down; unemployment was rampant; anarchy, crime and violence in the streets reached frightening proportions. ... Hundreds of schools, hospitals, health and day-care centres, shops, post offices, collective farms, and industrial plants were either looted or destroyed, causing further damage to an economy which was already in virtual ruins. The public transportation system broke down, and disorder prevailed. (Tarifa 1995, 148)

These developments were accompanied by uncontrolled demographic movement and a degree of government laissez-faire hard to distinguish from ‘economic and judicial anarchy’ (De Waal 2005, 5). The new (anti-communist) government that came to power in 1992 ‘began to implement a fully-fledged neoliberal programme based on economic liberalisation, monetarist policies, massive and rapid privatisation, and the opening up of the local market to foreign capital, often referred to as shock therapy. During the 1992–1996 period, Albania became the ‘shining star’ of the IMF and the World Bank, the ‘success story of the Balkans’” (Kajsiu 2012, 57). This programme, however, did not produce the expected outcomes. It led to some macroeconomic stabilisations (Bezemer 2001) but also major declines in income and employment, a constant reduction of unemployment benefits, shrinkage of the social security system and high rates of emigration (Kajsiu 2015, 57).

Albanian families relied mostly on remittances and investments in Ponzi or pyramid schemes (Korovilas 1999; Musaraj 2011) developed from 1992 to 1997. These Ponzi schemes offered superior returns by paying early investors with money paid in by subsequent investors, not from

profits generated by investments (Musaraj 2011, 85). In Albania, people deposited money with the promise of interest rates up to 100 per cent in financial schemes run by local businesspersons and even anonymous individuals. Many families sold their houses and deposited the money in these schemes. Most likely, slightly more than half of total investments came from remittances (Korovilas 1999). Hundreds of thousands of Albanians lost their savings worth approximately US\$2 billion, or 15 per cent of Albania's gross domestic product (GDP) (Barjaba and Barjaba 2015). Pyramid schemes were not exclusive to Albania and took place in other post-socialist countries, including Romania, Russia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Bulgaria and the former Yugoslavia (Verdery 1996). Among the most known are the Caritas in Romania (Verdery 1996) and the MMM in Russia (Bezemer 2001). Despite similarities with these other cases, the case of Albania is unique for the reach of these Ponzi schemes among the Albanian population, the amount of money invested and the suddenness of the collapse and its consequences, including a popular uprising in 1997 and the dissolution of state institutions for several months³.

After 1997, Albania entered a period of state reconstruction, followed by political and economic stability. The European Union (EU) Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Albania was signed in 2006 and entered in force in 2009 (European Commission 2015). Also, Albania became a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 2009 and was granted EU candidate status in June 2014. Despite the post-1997 recovery, many economic problems still persist. Agriculture sector accounts for only one-fifth of national GDP although it employs almost half of workers. This sector is generally limited to small family operations and subsistence farming due to a lack of modern equipment, unclear property rights and the prevalence of small, inefficient plots of land (CIA 2015). Corruption, property issues, inadequate infrastructure and the weak judicial system remain the major obstacles to developing an attractive business environment for foreign investment and returning migrants (CIA 2015, BBC 2015, Mai and Paladini 2013). Albania remains one of the poorest countries in Europe outside the former Soviet Union. Public debt stood at 60 per cent of GDP in 2013 and rose to 72 per cent in 2014 (BBC 2015; CIA 2015). Unemployment increased to 17.3 per cent in 2015, while youth unemployment was more than 30 per cent in 2014 (World Bank 2015; Barjaba and Barjaba 2015).

Remittances⁴ constitute a major source of financial support for families and thus contributes to the improvement of their living standards amid the lack of state social policies and state solidarity

³ For more information and analysis of pyramid schemes in Albania, see Musaraj (2011) and Bezemer (2001). Concerning the similar case of Romania, see Verdery (1996).

⁴ I do not cover this issue in this dissertation. For more detailed and developed research on remittances, see Uruçi and Gëdeshi (2003), World Bank (2007), Vullnetari (2012), Vullnetari and King (2010, 2011) and Korovilas (1999)

(Vullnetari 2012; Danaj 2014). Remittances peaked at nearly 952 million euros in 2007, accounting for 15 per cent of GDP, but have been decreasing since then (Barjaba and Barjaba 2015). Moreover, few remittances have been invested in economic activities, and these businesses are small, have limited productivity and are often informal (King and Vullnetari 2010; Gëdeshi 2008).

A parallel increase in the poverty rate since 2008 can be noted, going from 12.5 per cent in 2008 to 14.3 in 2012 (INSTAT and World Bank 2015). Furthermore, statistics show a shift of poverty from rural mountain areas to central urban areas⁵. In this context, migration—internal and international—took its shape and remains a major force driving social transformation in Albania. Albania can indeed be considered to be a laboratory for the study of migration, as expressed by King (2005).

2.2 Migration in Albania

The twentieth-century history of Albania before 1991 can be divided by two main moments: before the establishment of and during the communist regime. Before the founding of the communist government in 1946, both internal and international movement took place. Internal migration consisted of rural–urban movement to main urban centres, coinciding with the first steps towards the development of industry, communications, trade and services. Despite the growth of the urban population, 80 per cent of the population lived in rural areas in 1945 (Çaro 2011). International migration mostly took the form of labour migration and was male dominated (Vullnetari 2007; Dahinden 2013). Migration for study and training purposes and educational opportunities in Albania were scarce. The impact of international migrants on socio-economic development can be seen in the increasing education levels in the cities with the highest migration rates (Vullnetari 2007).

The communist government forbade international migration and controlled internal migration. However, at least from immediately after the establishment of the new regime until 1950, Albania saw some international population movement, especially by those with political affiliations opposed to the new regime. After 1950, crossing borders was forbidden unless for short, approved, official visits or studies. The state organised internal migration primarily to develop various urban centres according to the needs of the labour force in different industries and to improve remote mountain areas, especially in the health and education sectors (Çaro 2011). Rural retention and

⁵ In measuring poverty, the Albanian Living Standards Measurement Survey divides Albania into four regions: coastal, central, mountain and Tirana (the urban area of Tirana City).

minimal urbanisation were practised starting in the early 1960s onwards (Sjöberg 1994), and use of a domestic passport was obligatory (Vullnetari 2014).

The system of internal passports resembled the internal passport in the former Soviet Union and present-day Russia (Wegren and Cooper Drury 2001; Shevchenko 2001) and the *hukou* in China (Chan and Zhang 1999; Levy 2015). The Soviet Union established a system of internal passports in 1932 to ‘manage the population flows’ (Wegren and Drury 2001, 17). China formalised the *hukou* system (i.e. a family registration programme that issues domestic passports regulating population distribution and rural-to-urban migration) as a permanent system in both rural and urban areas (Chan and Zhang 1999). Similar to the cases of Russia (and the former Soviet Union) and China, the objective of Albania’s internal passport system was to control the population’s internal movement, primarily from rural to urban areas, to balance rural and urban populations and to serve two most important economic sectors, agriculture and industry. The restriction of internal movement was aimed primarily at rural–urban migration, especially to Tirana. Still, people found ways to bypass these restrictions by, for example, moving to the rural areas neighbouring the forbidden cities and by marrying urban dwellers. A more concrete example is diverted migration (Sjöberg 1992) to Tirana, as presented later in this chapter.

2.2.1 Post-1991 migration—entanglement of internal and international migration

However, with the breakdown of the communist regime, migration became a major issue in Albania. Indeed, we might say that migration has been one of the most significant developments in post-communist Albania. Although migration, both internal and international, started in 1990, when it was understood that the regime might change, only in 1993 was the internal and international movement of Albanian citizens liberalised. Article 22 of the Law on Amendments to the Constitutional Provisions, made in 1993, recognised the right of all Albanian citizens to choose their place of residence, move freely within the state’s territory and emigrate abroad (Vullnetari 2007). The Constitution of 1998, (which remained in effect in 2016), states that ‘everyone has the right to choose its inhabitancy and move freely in every part of the state territory and nobody should be impeded to move freely out of the state’ (Ikonimi 2009, 109).

Ikonimi (2009) points out that the Albanian constitution uses the expression ‘nobody should be impeded to move freely out of the country’, not ‘everybody has the right to move out of the country’, as other countries limit the right to enter them. As Wihtol de Wenden (2015, 2) explains, recognition of Albanians’ right to move out of the country, notably in the case of former socialist countries, was not necessarily followed by the right to enter another country, contrary to the

essence of several international documents, such as the Universal Declaration of the Rights of 1948 and the 1990 United Nations Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families. To move from Albania to another country, Albanian citizens could enter another country only after complying with its visa regime. The EU and other developed countries put in place strict visa regimes (Vullnetari 2007) that made it difficult for Albanian citizens to leave the country through legalised ways. Visas were mostly issued for official visits, students and tourism purposes, with particular restrictions related to applicants' financial situation and employment in Albania. Albanian citizens could also migrate for work purpose on regular work visas if they fulfilled all the requirements of the foreign country and it accepted their application. That is why the liberalisation of the EU Schengen tourist visa in 2010 was a significant moment in the free movement of Albanian citizens.

With the lack of the right to freely enter other countries and the criminalisation of irregular border crossings (Wihtol de Wenden 2015), smuggling and human trafficking (Morokvasic 2006) became highly profitable businesses for organised crime and mafia, and Albania was no exception. Speed-boat smuggling of migrants to Italy through the coastal city of Vlora (Mai 2004) continued at a significant pace until the late 2000s despite numerous drownings and deaths. In south-eastern Albania, the border with Greece became a resource generating various activities for the villagers living along it: offering accommodations for the 'candidate migrants' preparing to cross the border, providing collective transportation and guides and working with the Greek collaborators that helped migrants cross the Greek border (de Rapper and Sintès 2006, 262).

In the following sections, I go into more details of the dynamics of the migration processes of Albanians since 1990. I first shortly discuss the development of international migration before delving into the details of internal population movements and return migration—remaining conscious that these processes are entangled and that migrants may engage in one or more. These diverse migratory movements have important gendered aspects which warrant consideration. Most studies dealing with these gendered aspects are quantitative, so the following sections are mostly based on these quantitative results and combine them with qualitative research when possible.

2.2.1.1 International migration

International migration 'unfolded dramatically with the fall of the Albanian communist regime' (Dahinden 2013, 4). Nearly 1.5 million Albanians, almost half of the nation's resident population, emigrated between 1990 and 2010 (Vullnetari 2012, 15; Gëdeshi and Jorgoni 2012, 6). The post-communist phase of the international migration in Albania started in 1990, with the so-

called ‘embassy phenomenon’ (Çaro 2011, 41). On 2 July 1990, more than 6,000 Albanian citizens entered fourteen foreign embassies in Tirana, seeking asylum. The West German embassy was the most popular refuge, sought by approximately 3,200 asylum-seekers (Tarifa 1995, 143). The Italian and French embassies were second and third choices.

Rumours about the opening of the borders, allowing everyone who wanted to leave, spread during this time. In July 1990, the Constitution of 1976, which banned all opposition organisation and international migration, was still in place, but the idea of getting out of the country was very prevalent. Albanians went to Greece through clandestine passages in the southern mountains (Vullnetari 2012)⁶. During the last days of December 1990, approximately 16,000 emigrants left. On the night of 31 December 1990, more than 5,000 people left Albania across the snowbound, mountainous frontier into Greece (Tarifa 1995, 147). In March 1991, more than 25,000 people seized boats in the harbour of Durres and managed to get to the Italian city of Brindisi. In August 1992, a new wave of 17,000 refugees escaped to Bari (Tarifa 1995, 153).⁷

During the early 1990s, most international emigrants were young men (World Bank 2007; Dahinden 2013). Few legal opportunities existed for Albanians to leave the country, and international migration was constructed as a dangerous physical act, requiring strength usually ascribed to masculinity (King and Vullnetari 2012). Albanian women seemed invisible in the early 1990s international migration, but King and Vullnetari (2012) recommend caution regarding this invisibility. They highlight women’s participation in international migration by dangerous speedboat travel to Italy and risky mountain pathways to Greece (King and Vullnetari 2012).

Another important moment of international migration came in the wake of the collapse of the pyramidal investment schemes in 1997 (Korovilas 1999; Bezemer 2001; Musaraj 2011). The number of people migrating abroad increased, peaking in 2000 at around 50,000 new migrants per year, and steadily decreasing since then (World Bank 2007, 36). Women’s participation in international migration also rose from 20 per cent to 60 per cent of male international migration from 1991 to 2001 (Azzarri and Carletto 2009, 7). The increasing number of women migrants process is explained primarily by family unification, as well as student migration (King and Vullnetari 2012). As in other post-communist countries, Albanian women engage in international migration for

⁶ For more details about Albanian migration to Greece, see Vullnetari (2012).

⁷ Two well-known movies artistically depict the Albanian boat exodus to Italy (Vullnetari 2007). *La nave dolce*, by director Daniele Vicari, is a documentary on the events in the early 1990s when thousands of Albanians seized boats in the Durres harbour and went to Italy. The documentary focuses on the story of one boat, the *Vlora*. Through historical documents and interviews, the film digs into the tumultuous situation in Albania and the reaction of Italy, facing not mass emigration but significant numbers of immigrants. The second movie *Lamerica* by director Gianni Amelio focusses on the social and economic developments in Albania the early 1990s in Albania and portrays the poverty and desperation of Albanian migrants to Italy.

various reasons, including seeking economic opportunities and escape from the gendered constraints in their home (Morokvasic 2004).

According to Morokvasic (2004, 8), women's mobility reflects the post-communist freedom of movement but might also be the 'result of coercion and human trafficking', offering both new opportunities but also an explosion of precarious jobs and increasing dependence. Albania is part of the visible development of the coercion and trafficking of women and girls, especially during the mid-1990s until the mid-2000s. In the trafficking of women, Albania was considered to be 'one of the centres of the recruitment and transport of women from eastern Europe to other countries, especially western Europe' (Van Hook, Gjermani and Haxhiymeri 2006, 30). Figures on the number of women and girls involved in trafficking, unfortunately, are still not accurate⁸, and in-depth investigations are also lacking.

Since the early 1990s, Albanian women have also emigrated for educational purposes. Italy has been the main destination country for student migrants, mostly due to the scholarship programmes offered by the Italian government and the loose requirements to enter Italian universities. In the early 1990s, one could register at an Italian university by sending a formal letter of guarantee from an Italian citizen or institution (most commonly religious institutions) or by depositing around 4,000 euros in a local bank in Italy (Këlliçi 2015). A student could apply for a scholarship after the first year of studies. In the late 1990s, the only requirement for a scholarship was the applicant's economic situation, and given the poor economic conditions of Albanian families, almost all Albanian students met this condition. Moreover, almost all Albanian youth knew the Italian language. Consequently, after 1998, the number of Albanian students significantly increased. However, the requirements became stricter in 2006 and 2007, and starting in 2008, the amount of the scholarships decreased significantly (Këlliçi 2015). While there are no accurate data on student migration during the early 1990s, around 9,000 Albanian students were studying abroad in 2003–2004 (Gërmenji and Milo 2011, 347). During the 2007–2008 academic year, the highest number of foreign students in Italy was from Albania (Zenelaga and Sotirofski 2011, 5). There were

⁸ I do not go into further details on this issue as it is not the objective of this dissertation. I, however, would like to add that various nongovernmental organisations estimates that as many as 10,000 Albanian women and girls were trafficked by 1997 and 30,000 by 1999 (Van Hook, Gjermani and Haxhiymeri 2006, 30) out of a total population of approximately 3 million (INSTAT 2002). It is worth mentioning that these figures have been subject to much debate and criticism, especially the methodology followed by the nongovernmental organisations. Unfortunately, the reports on trafficking produced in Albania have often remained at the level of figures and legal frameworks, often falling into the trap of stereotyping trafficked women and girls. For more nuanced and in-depth information and analysis about trafficking in Albania and in other post-communist countries, see Davies (2009), Mai (2001), Tarrius (2011), Morokvasic (2006), Vullnetari (2009) and Ekonomi et al. (2006).

11,415 Albanian students in Italian universities, including 4,659 male students and 6,756 female students (Zenelaga and Sotirofski 2011, 5)

Greece and Italy have been the top destination countries for Albanian international migrants, with an estimated 600,000 and 500,000 Albanian migrants, respectively (Barjaba and Barjaba 2015). Other migrants target Canada, France, Germany, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States (Barjaba and Barjaba 2015). Social networks and patterns of chain migration have taken on major roles in the process of international migration (Vullnetari 2007). Social network support occurred not only in post-1991 migration but also earlier migration practices. For example, Albanian *minoritarë*⁹, primarily but not exclusively from southern villages, mobilised their ‘fossil’ networks in Greece to migrate and obtain residency documents and employment more easily than ethnic Albanians (Sintès 2003, 129). Albanians living in the southern borderland villages revived familial and friendship networks with Greek citizens in order to support their migration projects (Sintès 2010).

Another significant characteristic of the first decade of international migration, 1990-2001, is the circular migration between Albania and Greece (Gemi et al. 2010). Albanian migrants were mostly employed on a seasonal or temporary basis in sectors characterised by informal activity and intense unskilled labour, such as agriculture, construction, tourism, small-scale family factories and housekeeping. ‘Circular, repeat, multiple, seasonal or frequent migrations became a silent feature of migration in the region particularly around the border regions’ (Gemi et al. 2010, 18). Although these circular movements were illegalised, many Albanian migrants engaged in them: more than 550,000 unauthorised migrants worked in Greece by the late 1990s, and most were employed in seasonal work and returned home in the offseason (Gemi et al. 2010). The participation in circular/seasonal/pendular practices, though, became difficult after 2000 due to increased border controls, ‘the stricter legalisation procedures’ introduced by Greek government in 1998 and three successive regularisation programmes, respectively in 1998, 2001, 2005. These three factors pushed migrants to adopt strategies of permanent settlement in Greece (Gemi et al. 2010). Unfortunately, there are no accurate data or information about the circular movements of Albanian men and women.

Data from the Census of 2011 show that international migration has continued during the decade of 2001-2011 (INSTAT 2012a). Differences between the numbers of men and women emigrating have disappeared: 288,000 men and 285,000 women emigrated during 2001–2011 (Bruijn

⁹ *Minoritarë* refers to members of the Greek ethnic minority in Albania. They benefitted in many ways compared to Albanian citizens of Albanian ethnicity, for example, getting visas to enter Greece and obtain residency permits and even Greek citizenship, which appeared to be quite impossible for those of Albanian ethnicity (Vullnetari 2007, 2012).

et al. 2014, 17). This development again indicates different international migration from the male-dominated migration of the early 1990s.

2.2.1.2 Internal migration

Post-1991 internal and international migration in Albania are strongly related and cannot be analysed in isolation from one another. Individuals and families have been involved in various movements linking internal and international migration (Vullnetari 2012; De Waal 2005; King, Skeldon and Vullnetari 2008). While crossing country borders remained challenging, and most emigrants left through illegalised ways, internal migration was not restricted or controlled anymore as during communism. Internal movement of the population started at the same time as international migration in the early 1990s. These two migration processes have a strong relationship as often, international migration by one (more) family member(s) was followed by internal movement by the rest of the family (De Waal 2005; Vullnetari 2012; Çaro 2011). Another pattern showing the connection of internal and international migration was the process of moving to Tirana to be a step closer to going abroad (Vullnetari 2014). Patterns of chain migration are also found in the process of internal migration. Çaro (2011) and Vullnetari (2012) emphasise and describe the role of networks in the internal migration process in Albania.

Internal migration in Albania cannot be framed as rural-to-urban movement as it includes urban-to-urban and rural-to-rural movements. For example, approximately 40 per cent of internal migrants moved from rural to rural areas, mostly around Tirana, from 1989 to 2001 (Vullnetari 2014). Furthermore, internal migration in Albania was accompanied by increases in the urban spaces of the main cities, such as Tirana, Durrës, Shkodër, Fier, Vlorë and Korçë, but decreases in other cities, such as Kukes and Dibër. Some cities, such as Saranda and Lezhë, experienced population declines due to international migration but received a substantial population influx from internal migration (INSTAT 2002, 2012a).

The internal movements resulted in the appearance of new urban areas. The post-1991 internal migration, followed by the movement of people toward urban centres, primarily Tirana and Durres, led to the settlement of empty land (mostly agricultural lands) and the construction of very simple housing. The creation of these new neighbourhoods was characterised by illegal construction of houses, a lack of infrastructure (e.g. streets, health and childcare centres and schools) and unauthorised access to water and electricity. The housing conditions and infrastructure, however, have been improving. The early simple housing called *barake* (Çaro 2011) were replaced by substantial brick houses of one or multiple floors as migrants thought a real brick house would be

harder to demolish if the police came to evict them from the house and land they had occupied (Gjermeni 2004). This supposition proved to be true, and currently, the legalisation of the informal settlements is underway throughout the country. The infrastructure in most areas, especially the peripheries of Tirana, has also been improved since the early 1990s (Çaro 2011).

The internal population movement also introduced new political and social challenges in both the destination and origin places. As mentioned, the infrastructure in the destination places was either inexistent or inadequate and needed to be constructed or improved. Furthermore, stigmatisation and prejudice towards internal migrants existed, especially in the large urban centres, such as Tirana and Durres. At the same time, internal migration emptied other cities and villages, negatively affecting the development of agriculture, industry, trade and other economic, social and cultural activities. For example, internal movement became a challenge for the social assistance scheme (*ndihmë ekonomike*) granted based on territorial criterion. Many people who left their cities and villages were not registered in the new destination and not entitled to receive social assistance. This example, along with those already mentioned, show some of the policy challenges concerning education, health care and social assistance scheme faced early in the post-1991 era.

In 2011, for the first time in censuses in Albania, the population in urban areas was higher than the population in villages. In the Census of 2011 (INSTAT 2012a), 53.7 per cent of the population lived in urban areas and 46.3 per cent in rural areas. Internal migration during 2001–2011 was characterised by the movement of entire families in contrast to part of families during the preceding decade. The growth of the urban population highlights another pattern of internal migration during 2001–2011: internal migrants tended to be established within cities, whereas the majority of movements during the 1990s were concentrated in the peripheries. This change was accompanied by a boom in the construction sector and the expansion of new and existing neighbourhoods in the main urban centres. Another notable characteristic was the young age of the internal migrants during this decade. More than 50 per cent of migrants who changed their city or village of origin were 15–34 years old, most in the 20–24 years age group (Galanxhi et al., 2014).

Unlike international migration, internal migration in Albania is female dominated. This difference may be explained by the trend described earlier: male family members migrated abroad, while the rest of the family, including women, moved internally. The predominance of women in internal movement has been documented since the pioneering work of Ravenstein (1885), who explicitly stated that women are more involved in internal short-distance movements, whereas men migrate from the country. Data from the first post-1991 census, conducted in 2001, showed that

internal migration from northern regions of Albanian involved all demographic groups, while migrants from the secondary centres¹⁰ tended to be young, educated and female (Galanxhi et al. 2004). During 2001–2011, internal migration by women increased. According to the Census of 2011, women made up 59 per cent of the internal migrants, and the sex ratio of internal migrants was 69 men for 100 women from 2001 to 2011 (Galanxhi et al. 2014, 25). Figure 1, which classifies internal migrants by age group and sex, clearly demonstrates the dominance of women in internal migration from 2001 to 2011.

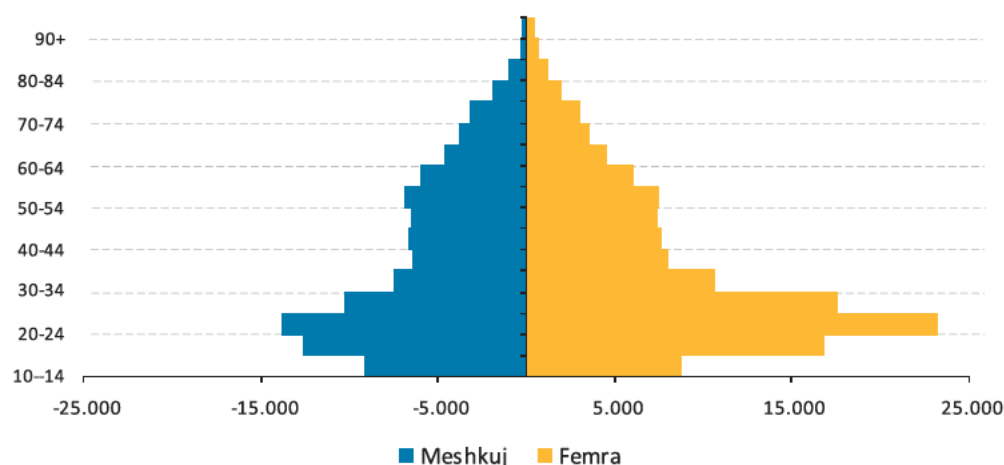


Figure 1: Internal migrants by age group and sex, 2001–2011. Meshkuj means male, and femra female. Source: Galanxhi et al. 2014, 25.

Census data also show gendered differences in the reasons for internal movement: men favour migration for employment, and women university studies (Galanxhi et al. 2014). The higher numbers of young women then may be explained ‘by the shares of female students in universities, which are all located in cities’ (Vullnetari 2012, 95). In a study on internal migration in Albania, Çaro (2011, 110) identifies several reasons for internal migration by women: a ‘better future for their children’, ‘better opportunities and a desire for city life’ and escape from the ‘patriarchal system’ in their place of origin and from the ‘control of their in-laws’. However, reasons for internal migration (which should not be restricted only to rural-to-urban migration) may vary by civil status, family situation, education and other factors, as explored in the following chapters.

2.2.1.3 Return migration

¹⁰ Secondary centres are cities in Albania that are less important than T'irana and Durres, the two main cities (Galanxhi et al. 2004, 63).

The Albanian Census of 2011 revealed that 139,827 Albanians returned to the country from 2001 to 2011 (Gemi 2015). However, the first signs of voluntary returnees—especially from Greece and Italy—can be observed in 1993–1996, after the first wave of migration at the early 1990s. These initial, sporadic movements dissipated due to the collapse of the pyramid schemes and the economic and political crisis that broke out in 1997 (King and Vullnetari, 2003). More significant rates of return migration emerged after the early 2000s as Albania entered a period of improving economic and political stability, and the main destination countries (Greece and Italy) began to face financial crises (Kopliku 2016). Indeed, returnees have been mostly men who emigrated to Greece (Galanxhi, Nesturi and Hoxha 2014). Women appear to have been ‘reluctant returnees’ (Morokavsic 2014, 368). Gemi (2015, 40) observes that women preferred to stay in Greece despite the difficult conditions they might face regime of irregularity. The reasons they give for ‘this resistance are linked first to the fact that they continue to work even on different terms and second, the issue of their children’s adaptation to the reality of Albania’ (Gemi 2015, 40). Amidst the economic crisis in Greece when many men lost their jobs, migrant women continued to work and adapt to the changing labour market, becoming the sole income providers for their families (Vaiou 2002).

The main reasons for returning to Albania included the loss of a job in the country of immigration and problems faced by the family left behind in Albania (Galanxhi, Nesturi and Hoxha 2014). Other grounds for return included better employment opportunities, investment plans and melancholy and longing for family and country, as identified by Mai and Paladini (2013) and Kopliku (2016). Return was considered to be a strategy to confront not only the negative consequences of the economic crisis and unemployment but also de-regularisation of work and residency permit (as observed in some of the cases analysed in this dissertation) (Gemi 2015).

Census 2011 figures show that approximately 40 per cent of return migrants decided to establish themselves in a location other than their city or village of origin, with Tirana the most preferred city (Galanxhi, Nesturi and Hoxha 2014). The census data reveal the patterns linking return and internal migration. Additionally, after return to Albania, migrants often decided to engage in circular migration between Italy and Albania to compensate for difficulties and problems experienced in both countries (Mai and Paladini 2013). After the family’s return to Albania, the husband or father often engaged in circular migration to Greece or attempted to migrate to another country (Gemi 2015). In research about return migration to the city of Shkodra, Kopliku (2016, 112) highlights that it is often difficult to distinguish the permanent returnee from the transnational migrant as migrants may organise their lives in both the home and the host countries. As well, return migrants to Albania may experience difficult readjustment due to the diverse work climate and culture in their home country and so consider another migration project (Kopliku 2016). These

patterns reinforce the main thread of this research conceptualising migration as a process with intertwined trajectories (Morokvasic 1984a, 2003, Tarrius 1993, Kofman 2004, Dahinden 2009, 2014). Return might not be a permanent move but lead to other migration trajectories (Black and King 2004).

2.2.2 Tirana: a 'magnet' for internal and return migration

The participants in this research come from cities and villages throughout Albania but lived in Tirana at the time of the interviews. Tirana is the main site of this research, so there is a need to describe the city to better understand the dynamics of migration in it. Tirana was proclaimed the capital of Albania in 1920 and has since seen a rapid increase in its population (Gëdeshi 2008) and its importance relative to other cities. Tirana remains the most attractive city in Albania for economic opportunities, education, health care access and cultural activities. During the communist period, Tirana, more than any other city, was the target of internal movement and the most desirable destination for a considerable number of Albanians, especially young people. As a major industrial, politico-administrative, educational and cultural centre, its periphery attracted what Sjöberg (1992) calls diverted migration, internal movement that was not rural toward urban but intra-rural. Although Tirana was the preferred destination of this intra-rural movement, settling there was quite difficult due to the restrictions of *pashaportizimi*¹¹ and controlled urbanisation. Thus, people opted for the 'second best alternative': the rural cooperatives or state agricultural enterprises next to Tirana (Vullnetari 2014). This unplanned in-migration brought about the growth of the peri-urban settlements of Tirana (Sjöberg 1992, 14).

After the fall of communism and the end of the restrictions on internal migration, Tirana saw significant population growth. Free movement policies (*lëvizja e lirë*) permitted residents of villages and cities to freely move to Tirana. 'Large-scale internal movements, land grabbing in urban and peri-urban areas followed by squatter settlements' characterised this early period of internal migration to Tirana (Vullnetari 2014, 51). Only in the 2010s did the Albanian government start a process to legalise the illegal settlements built in the urban and peri-urban areas mostly by internal migrants.

During 1990–2000, most internal migrants came from the northern and mountainous regions (Galanxhi et al. 2004). During the second decade, migration from other important cities,

¹¹ *Pashaportizim* refers to the use of domestic passport/identity card as a condition in the process of internal movement (Vullnetari 2014, 49).

such as Berat, Fier and Vlora, increased (Galanxhi, Nesturi et al., 2014, 16). This pattern may also be observed among the women interviewed for this research, with those from the northern areas migrating to Tirana earlier than those from other southern cities. Considering only the municipality of Tirana, it saw a population growth of more than 40 per cent from 1989 to 2001 and 20 per cent from 2001 to 2011 (Vullnetari 2014, 55). Another indicator of the growth of Tirana since 1990 is recorded by Pojani (2010): the urbanised area of Tirana grew from 12 square km in 1990 to 32 square km in 1994 and 56 square km in 2002.

Looking beyond the figures, since 1990 Tirana has been absorbing people from remote, mountainous areas stuck in deep poverty and appalling living conditions (Galanxhi et al. 2004; Çaro 2011; Xhindi 2013). While most of the internal migrants from these regions have settled in the peri-urban areas next to Tirana, others have settled within the municipality of Tirana, and furthermore, most have sought employment and public services within the urban Tirana. At the same time, the new 'rich' from other cities have come to Tirana for better business opportunities, education, health services and access to social life (Xhindi 2013, 86). These trends have made Tirana the city with the largest inequalities in living conditions in Albania (INSTAT and World Bank 2015).

Infrastructure and public services have lagged behind population growth, leaving many gaps in infrastructure, public health and education services and environmental protection (Xhindi 2013) and transportation (Pojani 2011). Water and electricity remain scarce and expensive resources in Tirana (Pojani 2010, 494). As a result of urban growth, increases in small businesses, growing individual wealth and greater use of electric heaters and air conditioners, demand for electricity has risen exponentially. Especially during the winter months, the entire city of Tirana has experienced daily power interruptions. During the summer months, water shortages have persisted. Water and electricity supply have been interconnected as the post-1991 multifloor buildings use electric appliances to pump water to the upper floors. Some interviewees highlight these issues, stressing that women, who are responsible for housework, suffer the most from these difficulties.

The continuing internal population movement and the economic crisis in sectors such as construction likely have driven the recent increase in the poverty rate in Tirana (INSTAT and World Bank 2015). In contrast, poverty in the mountainous area of Albania fell by half between 2008 and 2012, possible due to population shifts from the mountainous areas to other regions. At the other time, Tirana witnessed a considerable increase in poverty, from 9 per cent in 2008 to 12 per cent in 2012 (INSTAT and World Bank 2015).

Tirana hosts most public and private education providers, almost all the international organisations and the majority of the NGOs in the country, as well as Albanian and foreign businesses. The capital city has the highest concentration of economic activity and generates 45 per

cent of the Albanian GDP (Xhindi 2013). It also issues more than 70 per cent of all credit to business in the country (Xhindi 2013).

In the 2011 Census data, the municipality of Tirana had a population of 418,495 (203,239 men and 215,526 women). Analysing the situation of women in Tirana remains difficult as such data are lacking. Some existing data disaggregated at the level of the municipality are old and not very relevant. Disaggregated data is also lacking at the level of mini-municipalities within the municipality of Tirana. Until June 2015, the municipality of Tirana was structured into 11 mini-municipalities. The neighbourhoods of Komuna e Parisit (in mini-municipality 5) and Don Bosko (in mini-municipalities 11 and 9) are the two sites of my research where the women participating in this research live (see Figure 2¹²).

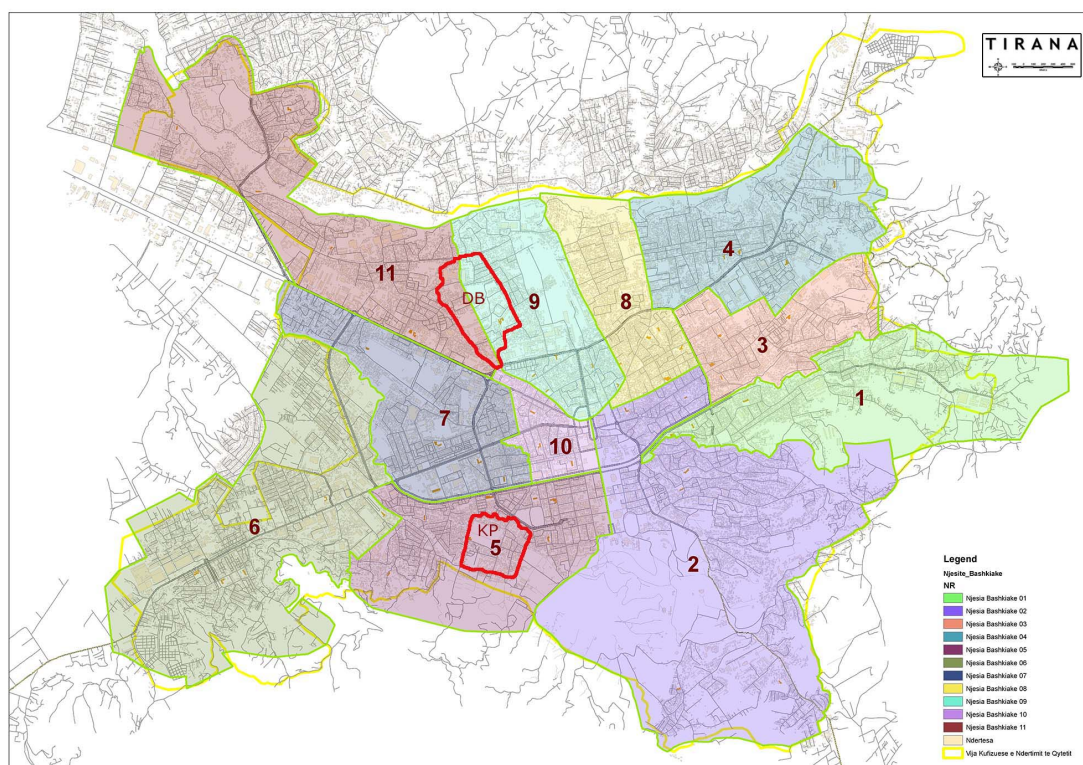


Figure 2: Map of Tirana mini-municipalities and the neighbourhoods of Don Bosko and Komuna e Parisit
Source: Original map from the Municipality of Tirana (www.tirana.al).

¹² These mini-municipalities existed until June 2015, when a new administrative map of local government was adopted. The drawing of the borders of the neighbourhoods Komuna e Parisit and Don Bosko is adapted for the purpose of this dissertation. Both neighbourhoods have no administrative status but are centred on the streets Komuna e Parisit and Don Bosko and called with these names. These two neighbourhoods do not have administrative borders, so we have tried to be as approximate as possible in drawing the borders, most based on the interviewees' information.

Don Bosko has been a destination for internal migration, mostly from the northern parts of the country, since the early 1990s, while Komuna e Parisit was developed later, primarily by internal migrants from southern cities. Unfortunately, few statistics have been disaggregated at the level of the mini-municipality, let alone by gender. The only data disaggregated at this level are on poverty, drawn from the ALSMS 2002, which gives a picture of the poverty distribution within the municipality of Tirana. The poverty rate is the highest, at 20–31 per cent, in mini-municipalities 4, 6 and 11, which also have the largest inflow of migrants (Zezza, Carletto and Davis 2005). In mini-municipalities 6 and 11, which include part of Don Bosko, nearly half the population consists of new residents who arrived between the 1989 and 2001 censuses (Zezza, Carletto and Davis 2005). However, the situation could be different in 2011 as internal migration continued during the second decade (2001–2011), drawing people from the south and concentrated on mini-municipality 5. Unfortunately, no such data could be found, limiting the description of my two research sites to the information provided by the participants and to my observations.



Figure 3: Don Bosko neighbourhood.
Source: Enisa Kociaj.

Don Bosko has been populated by internal migration since the early 1990s, mostly from northern regions, according to the key informants and to the Census 2001 data. Initially, few multifloor buildings existed in the area, and one- or two-floor houses predominated. Over the years, a boom of high buildings of all types occurred, leading to an unorganised mixture of houses and

high buildings that reveals a lack of urbanisation planning. The streets are still lacking in quality, and sidewalks are often inexistent. Furthermore, poor-quality and luxury buildings may be observed standing next to each other. During my visits and meetings with the participants, I observed some buildings in very poor quality in both the façade and the interior. In some buildings, the construction work was half done, leaving the residents to pay for the rest. The price of these apartments was quite low compared to apartments in other areas or buildings, and many migrants could not afford more.

While walking in Don Bosko, one gets the feeling of chaos due to the heavy car traffic, lack of sidewalks and many shops and coffee bars along of the streets. Few playgrounds or green parks could be observed (I saw none except at the Don Bosko social centre, which gives the neighbourhood its name). Children played mostly on the sidewalks or courtyards in homes (when they existed). The neighbourhood has been growing in density, in people, buildings and vehicles. My observations and discussions with people in the neighbourhoods revealed that migrants' origins have changed over the years, shifting from the northern villages to the southern towns of Vlora, Fier, Tepelenë and Gjirokastrë.

The situation is somewhat different and similar in the neighbourhood of Komuna e Parisit. Figure 4 shows only a small part of the construction and the chaotic infrastructure in this neighbourhood. Before 1989, Komuna e Parisit was an empty field housing only some greenhouses and large fields offering the perfect spot for school-organised excursions and picnics. Today, it is one of the most populated areas in the municipality of Tirana, with buildings piling on top of each other. Komuna e Parisit was developed during the late 1990s and especially during 2000s, with population coming mostly from the southern areas. A significant number of women could also be observed in the streets, as was the case in Don Bosko. Women shopped in grocery shops, walked with their children and sat in the coffee bars. Another observation in Komuna e Parisit (and also Don Bosko) was that women as sellers or workers managed the majority of shops and services (e.g. dry cleaning and pharmacies).



Figure 4: *Komuna e Parisit neighbourhood.*
Source: Fjolla Spanca.

The problem of narrow and often-absent streets and sidewalks could also be observed in this neighbourhood. In the chaotic urban development and absence of urban planning in Komuna e Parisit (as seen in Figure 4), spaces between buildings are small, and green spaces and playgrounds are lacking. The only advantage over Don Bosko is that Komuna e Parisit is next to the National Park and Lake of Tirana, which could compensate somewhat for the lack of green spaces and playgrounds. In another difference, Komuna e Parisit is more preferred by students renting shared apartments. Komuna e Parisit is near Bllok, a central area of Tirana preferred by young people, and is considered to be safer than other neighbourhoods. Even though apartments in other neighbourhoods might be cheaper, many young people (students and graduates) favour Komuna e Parisit due to safety.

2.3 Situation of women in Albania

In this section, I present some main patterns in the conditions of women in Albania during communism and after 1991. This section draws mostly from statistical data and provides an overall review that sets the background of the analysis of the experiences of 32 migrant women interviewed for this dissertation. This section starts with a brief overview covering the twentieth century until the year 1991.

2.3.1 *Women's situation before 1944*

It is hard to find detailed, accurate data and information on the situation of women in pre-1944 Albania. Some information can be gleaned from popular narratives, such as songs, stories and the literature from that period denouncing the subordinated position of women. Very few women and girls were educated, and female illiteracy was higher than 90 per cent (Gjonca, Aasve and Mencarini 2008). Illiteracy was more widespread in rural areas and the undeveloped north-east (Gjonca, Aasve and Mencarini 2008). As in many other countries, women's right to participate in political and social activities was restricted (Musaj and Nicholson 2011). The health system was very poor, and the infant mortality rate was 148 deaths per 1,000 live births (Gjonca, Aasve and Mencarini 2008, 263). In addition, women's participation in paid employment was low: in 1937, Albania had 345 female teachers, several female gynaecologist doctors and also a few women working in new factories in Korçë, Shkodër, Tirana and other cities (Në Dobi të Gruas Shqiptare 2012). Marriage was almost universal among women, with their average age at marriage younger than 20 years. By 15 years old, 29 per cent of all females were married, while more than half were married by age 18 years, and more than four-fifths at age 20 years (Gruber 2002). Gruber and Pichler (2002) report that the average age at marriage was 18 years old for women and 28 for men. The wide age gap between spouses may be considered to be an indicator of their unequal positions within the family, making male domination within the household very effective (Doja 2010).

During the early 1930s, local newspapers published some articles about the feminist ideas and movements in other countries and criticised the position of women in Albania. Furthermore, several organisations promoting women's rights (e.g. education, paid employment outside the home and participation in public and political life) were founded, mostly mainly in urban areas such as Shkodër, Korçë, Vlorë, Tirana and Gjirokastër (Musaj and Nicholson 2011). The Civil Code approved in 1928 changed in women's situation at least from a legal perspective. The approved civil code marked an official departure from the traditional, customary laws prevalent throughout the county and instead recognised women's 'right to divorce, and equality with the husband regarding the right to inheritance' (Musaj and Nicholson 2011, 193). Another achievement was the establishment of the minimum age for marriage at 16 years old for girls and at 18 years old for men. This civil code did not include the right to vote as was requested by women's organisations and supported by liberal members of parliament, and women's right to employment remained limited (Musaj and Nicholson 2011, 193).

2.3.2 Women's emancipation model—the communist period

One of the strongest policies adopted by the communist regime was the ‘emancipation of the woman’, using the government’s terminology. This model applied across communist countries (called the ‘women’s emancipation model’ by Moghadam 1995, 335) included policies supporting women’s participation in the productive labour force and the introduction of new laws promoting the equality of men and women. In Albania, the new Constitution of March 14, 1946, granted equality of rights between women and men. According to the new law on marriage adopted in 1948, marriage was based on the equal rights of both spouses (Keefe et al. 1971, 34). One of the major changes in this new law was the age of marriage: 18 years for both sexes. The concept of the head of the family, recognised by pre-communist civil law, was rejected. Under the 1948 law, each spouse had the right to choose their occupation, profession and residence and to ask for divorce (Keefe et al. 1971).¹³

In a 1955 speech at the Fourth Congress of the Women’s Union of Albania, Hoxha proclaimed women to ‘the proletarian of man’ who previously had ‘only one right: to bear children and to slave day and night’ (Woodcock 2016). In 1956, in a report on the work of the Albanian Party of Labour, Hoxha criticised the attitudes of Albanian men who continued to consider themselves to be the heads of the household and who took the credit for all the work done while keeping women’s work in the shadows. Regarding the multiple burdens of women, Hoxha declared that ‘efforts must still be made to extend the range of main products and lower costs. Social catering units, and especially the canteens and restaurants are not up to the task of becoming centres for feeding the family, so that they can help to lighten women’s household chores so that they can participate in production to a wider extent’ (Hoxha 1974, 536). Such social services for women emerged throughout the former socialist countries (Gal and Kligman 2000). These social services and structures were first introduced in 1919 in the Soviet Union, with the aim of supporting women’s entry in the productive sphere (Sperling 1996). Hoxha, the leader of the Albania Party of Labour, launched the campaign for the emancipation of women in 1967 with a series of speeches repeated in 1969 (Keefe et al. 1971; Danermark et al. 1989). The new regime made literacy one of its primary objectives, with a special focus on women and girls. Indeed, ‘the investment in education, particularly female education during communism, was unprecedented in Albania. Female illiteracy improved from 92 percent in 1945 to less than 8 percent in 1989, and by 2002 it was less than 5 per cent, similar to most developed European societies’ (Gjonca, Aasve and Mencarini 2008, 284). Educational levels have risen faster for women and girls than men (Danermark et al. 1989).

¹³ The basic divorce law, originally passed in 1948, provided that either spouse may ask for divorce on the grounds of incompatible character, continued misunderstandings, irreconcilable hostility or any other reason that disrupted marital relations to the point where a common marital life had become impossible (Keefe et al. 1971; Danaj et al. 2005).

In addition, women's employment was another central policy target of the communist government's 'women's emancipation model' (Moghadam 1995). Full employment of women and girls served several aims: it was seen as essential to emancipation but also provided a huge labour force needed for the reconstruction of socialist countries (Rosenberg 1991; Kligman 1994). Most communist countries defined women primarily as workers, a significant change from the pre-war imaginary (Gal and Kligman 2000). This shift was part of the broader communist commitment to homogenise and equalise the populace with the aim to eliminate all social distinctions, including gender, and to construct the 'new socialist man' (Gal and Kligman 2000; Jinga 2011). The full employment of women and girls was also necessary to bring them into the public sphere, weaken the influence of the old traditions and practices and make it easier to educate them with the new principles of the new society. Women also increasingly participated in sectors usually not considered to be feminine professions, such as engineering, chemistry, electrical machinery and electronics (Danermark et al. 1989). The female-typed professions, though, remained dominated by women. Women's education and employment lead to increased participation in public and political life.

Unlike from other countries such as the former Yugoslavia, Albania had no tradition of feminist movement or organisations during communism. All the activities regarding women resulted from the initiative of the party and the Albanian Women's Union (Fico 2014). The Albanian Union of Women, founded in 1943, took charge of increasing women's participation, especially in public and political life (Jacobs 1945; Keefe et al. 1971). The parliament of 1974–78 had the highest percentage of women members of parliament in Albania's history, at 35.2 per cent (see Table 1) (Keefe et al. 1971).

Table 1: Number and percentage of female members of parliament (MP), 1921–1991.

<i>Year</i>	Total number of MPs	Number and per cent of female MPs
<i>1946–1950</i>	82	6 (7.3)
<i>1950–1954</i>	121	17 (13.9)
<i>1954–1958</i>	134	16 (11.9)
<i>1958–1962</i>	186	17 (9.1)
<i>1962–1966</i>	214	25 (11.7)
<i>1966–1970</i>	240	39 (16.3)
<i>1970–1974</i>	264	71 (26.7)
<i>1974–1978</i>	250	88 (35.2)
<i>1978–82</i>	250	81 (32.4)

1982–1986	250	78 (31.2)
1987–1991	250	75 (30)

Source: Ekonomi et al. (2009) and the Central Committee of Elections (www.ccc.org.al).

Albanian women occupied high positions in the communist bureaucracy and served as highly qualified workers in the economy. However, an equal division of roles and responsibilities within the household did not follow. In the case of Romania, for example, studies on women's situation in the early 1970s showed that the unequal division of household labour posed the first primary to women's equal participation in the public sphere (Jinga 2011, 120). The traditional gender roles, placing women in charge of reproductive work and men productive work, prevailed in the domestic sphere. Sometimes, women's participation in public life (e.g. political and community meetings) demanded many sacrifices, especially in their relationships with their husbands (Çuli 2012; Keefe et al. 1971). Men did not experience the same situation; they were exempted from unpaid and care work and, in many cases, retained their dominant role within the family. According to the official discourse, women had to be as active as men in the public sphere, but responsibility for housework still fell on women. In general, 'housework and childcare were seen as primary female responsibilities' (Rosenberg 1991, 139). Women remained caregivers even as they fulfilled their new roles working full time for the national economy (Woodcock 2016). In this situation, women bore the 'double burden' of carrying out work in the state sphere and the family (Kligman 1994, 256; Sperling 1996, 47). However, it should be emphasised that women in other parts of the world faced the same double burden (Pen and Massino 2009).

Women were praised not only as workers but also as mothers (Brunnbauer 2000). The cinema, one of the strongest propaganda channels, glorified the image of the woman who worked outside the home and was also a dedicated mother and wife (Puto 2013). For example, from the 1960s, the Romanian and Bulgarian governments put increasing emphasis on the 'foremost and natural' role of women to give birth to children, due to concerns over declining birth-rates (Brunnbauer 2000). In the case of Romania, pro-natalist policies became very repressive, abortion was penalised in 1966 (Kligman 1998; Jinga 2011). Women thus were burdened with the duty of enlarging the socialist nation and played important roles in the construction and reproduction of nationalist ideologies (Anthias, Yuval-Davis and Cain 1993). By dressing and behaving properly and giving birth to children within legitimate marriages, women both signified and reproduced the symbolic and legal boundaries of the collectivity.

In Albania, contraception and abortion were illegal throughout the communist period. Condoms were difficult to procure, no contraceptive pills were imported, education or literature on

the reproductive cycle as not provided, and traditional methods of contraception, such as withdrawal, were practiced (Woodcock 2016). Kligman (1998) and Jinga (2011) document a similar situation in Romania, where pressures over physical intimacy arose after Ceausescu came to power. The status of abortion and reproductive rights was not uniform across the former socialist countries. For example, in Poland, abortion was legalised during communism and delegalsed afterwards, while Russia legalised abortion in 1920, penalised it from 1936 to 1955 and then legalised it again after Stalin's death (Wites 2004).

It should be said here that ironically, one of the most important features of the pre-communist, traditional role of woman¹⁴ was transferred to the state, which required that women give birth to children for the sake of the nation. In its first decades, the communist regime promoted high fertility and proclaimed mothers of six or children to be heroic mothers (*nëna heroína*). Interestingly, the fertility decline in Albania did not start with the post-1991 transformations in Albania but in 1960, steadily falling from the very high post-war levels. The total fertility rate, which was still close to 7 births per woman in the early 1960s, decreased to 3.0 in 1990 (Danaj et al. 2005; Lerch 2013). This decline happened in the absence of any family planning, unlike in the case of China that has imposed strict family planning policies since the 1970s (Gjonça, Aasve and Mencarini 2008). The distinctive feature of fertility reduction in Albania compared to other European countries was that it decreased for women of all ages and in both rural and urban areas, with only slight differences (Gjonça, Aasve and Mencarini (2008). Gjonça, Aasve and Mencarini (2008) attribute this pattern to the increased education of women and girls in rural areas, a priority of the communist government, as along with higher participation in productive work. Women's double burden provided another reason for unwillingness to have many children, independent of the pro-natalist policies and political discourses of the 1950s and 1960s. The decline of the number of children can be seen as a resistance to state policies regarding reproductive rights and as a tactic for coping with the increasing economic difficulties, especially since the late 60s. These economic conditions may also explain why the state allowed this decline in the fertility rate.

The analysis of the conditions of women during communism is complex, and clear-cut, yes/no responses to questions about the liberation (or not) of women under socialism are inadequate. This complexity is further reflected in the conditions of women in the aftermath of the fall of communist regimes, as presented in the next section.

¹⁴ 'A female was worthy with reference to the interests of her male protector, her husband, her master, and lord. Her task was to give birth to his children and serve as a symbol and prize for his male honour. This was the traditionalist ideal of a proper woman' (Doja 2010, 361).

2.3.3 Post-1991 period—a brief presentation of women's situation

A striking feature of the post-communism period was the withdrawal of women from economic, political and public life. The situation in Albania resembled that in other post-socialist countries. Kligman (1996) argues that the debates about foreign investments, shock therapies and reproductive and minority rights in the post-socialist countries should be concerned not only the economic transformation but also the definition of gender identities. Neoliberal programmes adopted across the region since 1989 have often resulted in higher rates of women's unemployment and the dismantling of public services of particular help to women (Gal and Kligman 2000, 8). The transition also bolstered a movement that may be termed *retraditionalisation*: a return to traditional values, family life and religion. Women's roles in society were redefined, and the home was again supposed to be women's proper place (Kligman 1994, 256).

Almost all former socialist countries saw a sharp drop in women's participation in politics and national governance (Kligman 1996, 70; Brunnbauer 2000). Women were noticeably absent in ministerial positions throughout the region, and they were typically excluded from decision-making roles in party politics. In 1994, no women held such positions in Albania, the Czech Republic, Hungary or Romania, and there was one woman among eighteen governmental ministers in Poland, and two in Slovakia (Kligman 1996). In Albania, the share of women among members of parliament dropped dramatically from 30 per cent to 4 per cent in the first post-1991 parliament and 5.7 per cent in the following legislature (Ekonomi et al. 2009).

Also, women's employment rate decreased sharply with the closing of many industries and services (UN Albania 2004; Miluka 2009). The gendered division of labour sharpened again, assigning men to the productive sphere and women to the reproductive one. 'Privatisation became a gendered concept. For men it meant entrepreneurship, for women domesticity' (Heyns 1995, 1344). Brunnbauer (2000) talks about the 'domestication' of women, referring not only to the visible withdrawal of women from the public sphere but also to the early 1990s policies and discourses that discouraged women's participation in productive work and public life. 'Masculine democracies' were created throughout the region, and men became the primary beneficiaries of the momentous promises of 1989 (Kligman 1996, 69).

In this context in the early 1990s, the 'political action and debate about Albania's past, present and future was completely void of gender analysis' (Fico 2014, 167). The public debate and the media depicted women as either as victims (of political oppression in the past and of poverty and sexual exploitation in the present) or as sex objects (Fico 2014). Women in Albania and other countries expressed mixed feelings about their place in the productive and reproductive sphere as

dictated by the double burden, the restrictions on freedom they had experienced during communism and the new economic programmes being implemented (for more, see Pen and Massino 2009).

During 1991–1993, the first women’s non-governmental organisations (NGO) in post-socialist Albania were founded. These organisations dealing with women’s issues expanded in the late 1990s and early 2000s. In post-socialist countries, a ‘gendering’ of the NGO sector seemed to occur, with women more involved in organisations with socio-economic and educational agendas, and men dominating groups involved in ‘high politics’ (Kligman 1996, 72). Nevertheless, this gendering should not undermine the role of NGOs’ activities in making visible and raising issues primarily related to women and children conditions (e.g. domestic violence, rape, trafficking, informal work and child abuse).

Since 1991, Albania’s legal framework has undergone major improvements through the ratification of a series of international documents, essential amendments and alignment of national legislation. Albania ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1993 and its optional protocol in 2003, although the harmonisation of laws and the implementation of CEDAW in practice took a very long time. Indeed, many necessary changes and improvements remain—especially for de-facto implementation of women’s rights. While development of the legal framework has been underway since 1995, the most significant events concerning gender equality, domestic violence, and anti-discrimination only date to 2006 (Kocaqi, Kelly and Lovett 2015, 16)¹⁵.

The political participation of women in Albania remained flat until the introduction of gender quotas in the Gender Equality Law and Electoral Code of 2008 (Ekonomi et al. 2009). These new legal provisions prompted a numerical increase women serving in parliament, on municipal councils and as mayors. The percentage of women among members of parliament rose to 21 per

¹⁵ The first Law on Domestic Violence was approved in December 2006 in response to a proposal sent to the assembly from civil society, supported by the signatures of 20,000 community members. In 2008, the Law on Gender Equality entered into force with a series of measures for the improvement of gender equality, including the establishment of the national gender machinery and women’s participation in decision-making in political and public spheres. The Law on Protection against Discrimination in 2010 was followed by the establishment of the Commissioner for the Protection against Discrimination as an independent body that safeguards against discrimination. In a major step, amendments to the Criminal Code in 2012 and 2013 addressed domestic violence and the protection of women and girls from violence and abuse. Albania has drafted two specific strategies on gender equality and domestic violence. First, the National Strategy on Gender Equality and Elimination of Domestic Violence covered the period of 2007–2010. Second, the National Strategy on Gender Equality, Reduction of Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence and its action plan covered the period of 2011–2015. The Albanian government has drafted four specific anti-trafficking strategies, including the National Anti-Trafficking Strategy and its national action plan for 2001–2004 and, more recently, the National Strategy on Combating Human Trafficking and its action plan for 2014–2017 (Kocaqi, Kelly and Lovett 2015).

cent in 2013 (INSTAT 2015a), and the percentage of women among mayors to 14 per cent after the 2015 local elections¹⁶.

Table 2: Number and percentage of female members of parliament (MP), 1991–2013.

<i>Year</i>	Total number of MPs	Number and percentage of female MPs
<i>1991–1992</i>	250	10 (4%)
<i>1992–1996</i>	140	8 (5.7%)
<i>1996–1997</i>	140	21 (15%)
<i>1997–2001</i>	155	11 (7.1%)
<i>2001–2005</i>	140	8 (5.7%)
<i>2005–2009</i>	140	10 (7.1%)
<i>2009–2013</i>	140	23 (16.4%)
<i>2013–</i>	140	29 (20.7%)

Source: Ekonomi et al. (2009), Central Committee of Elections (www.ccc.org.al) and INSTAT (2015a).

Despite the increase in women's participation in the labour market since immediately after the fall of communism, it remains low compared to men's. In 2014, almost half (49 per cent) of the female population aged 15–64 years old was out of the labour market, neither employed (43 per cent) nor unemployed (8 per cent) (INSTAT 2015b). In contrast, 28 per cent of men were out of the labour market, 58 per cent were employed, and 14 per cent were unemployed. Another feature of women's labour market participation is that half of employed women were self-employed in the agriculture sector (compared to 36 per cent of men), and among these women, 87 per cent worked for self-subsistence, significantly limiting their economic situation (INSTAT 2012, 2014).

The occupational gender segregation, both horizontal and vertical, in Albania is not that different from other countries. In gender-based occupational segregation, 'men and women do different kinds of work, so that one can speak of two separate labour forces, one male and one female, which are not in competition with each other for the same jobs' (Hakim 1979, 1). Regarding career advancement, women are hurt in vertical occupational segregation as 'men dominate higher-grade higher-paid occupations and women are concentrated in lower-grade, lower-paid occupations in the same area of activity' (Hakim 2006, 284). The gender wage gap (i.e. the difference between

¹⁶ Figures drawn from the webpage of the Central Elections Committee (www.ccc.org.al).

women's and men's earnings), expressed as a percentage of male earnings (Danaj 2015), was 17.63 in 2011 (Miluka 2011).

In the domestic sphere, women almost exclusively perform unpaid care work (INSTAT 2011). The same source shows that women with young children have the less free time and dedicate the most time to unpaid work compared to men and to women with older children or no children. Women with no partners and no children spend less time in unpaid work and have the most free time. Employed women have the longest working day (i.e. total work), the least free time and the least time for personal activities. According to the Time Use Survey (INSTAT 2011), women spend two more hours a day on work of any kind (i.e. paid and unpaid work) than men, seven hours versus five hours, respectively. Men also are more advantaged in free time and personal care compared to women (INSTAT 2011).

The data presented here reveal some of the main patterns of women's engagement in paid and unpaid work at the national level. The situation is more complex than presented here, but a withdrawal of women from the labour market to reproductive care work, resulting in reconfiguration of the gender roles, can be observed, even among young women. Furthermore, even women with paid employment almost still have responsibility for reproductive work and care. The national-level data serve as a frame to better situate and understand the experiences of the women participants in this research.

With regard to education, no significant differences in the numbers of boys and girls appear at the basic education level¹⁷. However, the enrolment rates are lower in rural areas and among the poor. Problems regarding the access to education for minority groups remain. Children with disabilities have a drop-out rate approximately ten times higher than the general drop-out rate, and the school participation rate of Roma girls is significantly lower than that of Roma boys (Wittberger et al. 2012). Visible gender differences, though, emerge in the secondary level, where boys are more numerous especially in rural areas, and the university level, where women outnumber men at an increasing rate (Wittberger et al. 2012). Figure 5 shows the number of male and female university students since 2000, indicating a growing gender gap in universities.

¹⁷ The educational system in Albania includes non-compulsory preschool education (ages 3-5 years), compulsory primary school (grades 1–6), compulsory lower secondary schools (grades 6–9) and non-compulsory upper secondary school (grades 10–12) (Law Nr 69/2012, On pre-university education in the republic of Albania <http://www.arsimi.gov.al/files/userfiles/arkiva/dok-0029.pdf>, in Albanian).

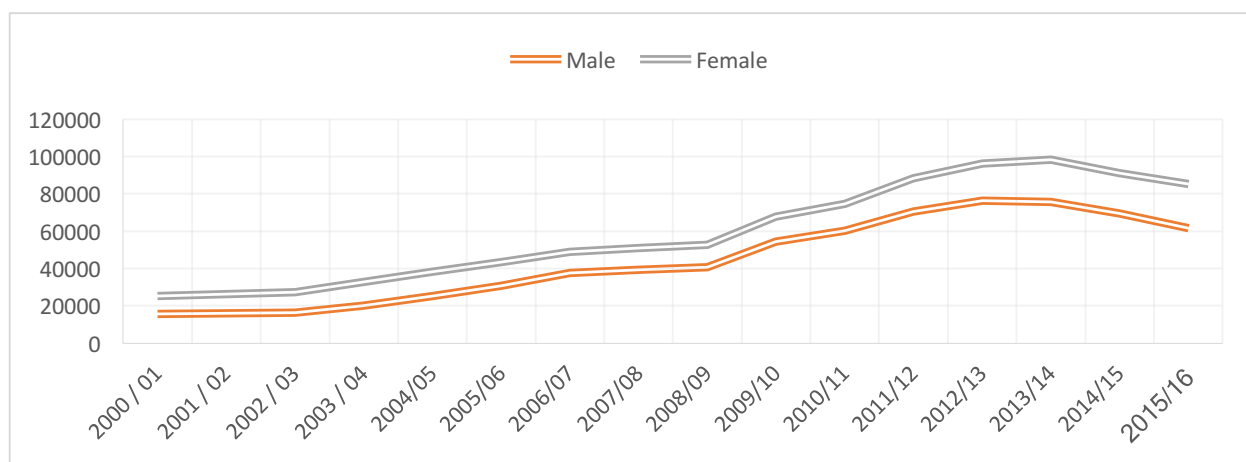


Figure 5: Number of students enrolled in Albanian Universities from the academic year 2000-01 to 2015-16, by gender
Source: INSTAT 2016, www.instat.gov.al, section of Education

One explanation for the widening gap among university students is that young men engage more in paid work and international migration (Ekonomi et al. 2004). Another explanation is young women's goal to move from their towns or villages of origin (as the cases in this research show). Expanding job opportunities, especially for young women, in a labour market where opportunities continue to be scarce, is another reason. The high number of female students may be one of the explanations the female-dominated internal migration in Albania (as also highlighted by Vullnetari 2012).

The importance of education for boys and girls may be one of the legacies of the communist period. The Census of 2011 data shows still high rates of education among boys and girls, even across variations in region and wealth. Moreover, parents' educational attainment seems to have no impact on children's level of education, according to the 2001 Census data (Danaj et al. 2005). Gilyuk (2016) reports a different situation in the case of Russia, finding a correlation between parents' education level and children's linguistic education.

The family is a crucial institution in the construction of gender relations and in the study of migration, as seen even in cases where women migrate on their own. To complete this national-level contextual panorama, I briefly present some patterns of family formation and family structure in Albania. The marriage rate in Albania remains very stable, at 8.9 in 1990 and 8.2 in 2012, and marriage remains almost universal (Danaj et al. 2005; Lerch 2009; Çela et al. 2012). Among youth aged 15–29 years old, approximately 0.2 per cent cohabitate (Danaj and Festy 2006)¹⁸. Nevertheless, slight changes in the age at marriage may be noted, rising from 27.3 years for men in 1990 to 29.5 years in 2014 and from 23.0 years for women in 1990 to 24.0 years in 2014 (INSTAT 2014a). Rural–

¹⁸ Unfortunately, more recent data on cohabitation are not available.

urban differences in the proportion of young married people exist. According to Census 2001 data, the percentage of married women ages 16–29 years is higher in rural areas. Also, those with university degrees have lower marriage rates than those with lower education levels. The influence of educational level is more significant at the age of 25–29 years when tertiary studies are completed. In this age group, people with university degrees have the lowest marriage rate (approximately 50 per cent).

The fertility rate in Albania decreased from 3.2 in 1989 to 2.1 in 2001 and to 1.8 in 2013 (INSTAT 2002, 2014). A fertility decline can also be noticed for young people, as shown Table 3, with the increasing numbers of childless women in urban and rural areas.

Table 3: Proportion of young childless women (percentage).

Years	Total	Urban	Rural
20–24 years old			
<i>Albania, 1989</i>	36.9	42.0	34.4
<i>Albania, 2001</i>	64.1	67.5	61.9
<i>Albania, 2011</i>	75.13	79.69	69.34
25–29 years old			
<i>Albania, 1989</i>	12.1	15.6	10.0
<i>Albania, 2001</i>	27.0	31.1	23.9
<i>Albania, 2011</i>	40.57	45.06	34.68

Source: Danaj et al. (2005) and Census 2011 (author's own calculation).

Based on the 2001 Census data¹⁹, the proportion of childless women at age 25–29 years is much higher among those with university diplomas (more than 50 per cent). Here, again, as in marriage, the influence of education level is very visible (Danaj et al. 2005). The decline in the fertility rate, especially postponing the birth of the first child, marks a change in national family-formation patterns. In addition, less than 1 per cent of births occur outside marriage, indicating that cohabitation rates remain low, similar to the 0.2 per cent rate in 2003 (Danaj et al. 2005). Unfortunately, more recent data are not available.

¹⁹ The fertility decline by education level cannot be calculated from the 2011 Census data, so I base the numbers in this paragraph on only the 2001 Census.

The decline in the fertility rate is one of the main factors driving the decrease in the average household size from 4.7 members in 1989 to 3.9 in 2011 (INSTAT 2002; INSTAT 2012a). The other factor may be the decline of the extended family due to migration, both internal and international. According to INSTAT (Bruijn et al. 2014, 19), the number of households ‘with more than one family nucleus’ decreased from 20 per cent to 10 per cent between 1989 and 2001. Nucleation of the family structure in Albania is driven by internal movement (Gjermani 2004; Çaro 2011) and international migration (Bruijn et al. 2014). Nevertheless, this process (Kaser 2014) did not start with post-communist migration but earlier. The first Albanian Census conducted by the Austro-Hungarian occupation forces in WWI (Kaser 2014) provides a different picture of Albanian household size than the ethnographic studies of the early twentieth century: only 8 per cent of all family households had more than 10 members, and the average was 5 or 6 members, while nuclear families constituted 39.7 per cent of rural households and 56.2 per cent of urban households (Kaser 2014, 101–102). After the establishment of the communist government, the ‘nuclearisation’ of the family structure became part of ‘modernisation measures’ (Kaser 2014, 103). In 1989, the average family size was 4.7, and it has continued to decrease.

It is important to reiterate here that the dynamics and nuances within the national-level data presented here are various and multiple. Some of these dynamics are explored and analysed in Part II of this dissertation that draws from women’s voices and experiences.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Neither observer nor observed come to a scene untouched by the world.

Kathy Charmaz (2006, 15)

This chapter lays out the methodological basis of this research, starting with a presentation of the research strategy which is based on a qualitative methodology and is inspired by grounded theory. The chapter continues with the research methods, such as the data collection and analysis techniques. The chapter then proceeds to the ethical issues and difficulties encountered while conducting the research.

3.1 Qualitative approach and research strategy

This research follows a qualitative approach as that is best suited to the aim of exploring gender relations and migration in Albania. To do qualitative research means ‘to step beyond the known and enter in the worlds of participants, to see the world from their perspective’ (Corbin and Strauss 2008, 16). Qualitative research allows the researcher to grasp the inner experience of the participants, to determine the formation of meanings through and in culture and to discover instead of testing variables. Moreover, qualitative research is a suitable tool when investigating the experiences of people undergoing change in a development context (Tinker 1997). In addition, qualitative research aids in better explaining migrant livelihoods by enabling in-depth understanding (Çaro 2011, 55). Thus, a qualitative feminist approach is justified.

Qualitative research focused on women’s experiences has become a very valuable tool for the feminist studies. Thirty years ago, Maria Mies (1983) outlined the reasons why feminist research is more linked to qualitative than quantitative studies. According to Mies (1983), quantitative research often ignores the voices of women, turns them into objects and analyses them in a value-neutral way rather than specifically as women. Qualitative research, in contrast, listens to women’s voices and considers their experiences. However, feminist scholars and researchers have argued that feminist research should not be undertaken using only qualitative methods, and the position of methodological pluralism has become more popular among gender researchers (Walby 2011).

In addition to qualitative research and the feminist social constructivist approach, I also chose to apply some elements of grounded theory methodology. This theory holds that both researchers and participants interpret meanings and actions and that both analysis and data are social constructions that mirror what their production involved (Charmaz 2006). Charmaz (2005)

furthermore highlights that grounded theory methodology is used in social justice research. This capability is crucial for my research, because as a feminist scholar, I aim not only to study and understand women migrants' experiences but also to identify and highlight present gender inequalities to contribute to change in women's situations.

In this research, I rely most on the works of Flick (2009), Hesse-Biber (2007a), Bryant and Charmaz (2007), Charmaz (2005) and Olesen (2007). Other sources such as Glaser and Strauss (2012), Mason (2002), Denzin and Lincoln (2005) provide a broad understanding and serious use of qualitative and grounded theory research methods. I follow Bryant and Charmaz's (2007) approach, considered to be a more constructivist approach to grounded theory research. According to Charmaz (2006, 10), data and theories are not discovered but rather 'part of the world we study and the data we collect'. Through our present and past interactions and involvements with people, research practices and perspectives, we construct our grounded theories (Charmaz 2006). Grounded theory methodology differs from other standard qualitative research methodologies as it does not include a linear process of conducting a literature review, formulating the hypotheses, gathering data and testing the hypotheses. As Charmaz states (2006, 10), 'grounded theorists stop and write whenever ideas occur to them'. In grounded theory, data gathering, analysis and construction are done simultaneously. Researchers start the data gathering and analysis at the beginning of the research process, and each process helps and orients the other (Flick 2009, 429; Bryant and Charmaz 2007a, 1). It is of great importance to mention here that the constructivist approach to grounded theory fits very well with feminist research by recognising the role of the researcher in the data construction and interpretation (Olesen 2007, 422).

3.2 Research methods and analysis

3.2.1 Fieldwork

When I started to think about this research, I intended to focus on a newly developed suburb of Tirana. Internal migrants were populating these areas that were small villages and large fields until recently. However, through involvement in various projects in these areas, I learned that several studies were already being conducted about different aspects of Albanian migration. After some time of reflection and discussion, I decided to modify my plans and focus on the city of Tirana. Doing so had the potential to be more difficult, especially for sampling, due to the size of the city. Nevertheless, I planned to conduct in-depth interviews with married women who migrated to Tirana and lived in the area of Don Bosko, a neighbourhood developed mainly due to internal

migration, as mentioned in Chapter 2. The exact number of women was not fixed beforehand as I had decided to construct the sample based on the analysis of the first set of interviews.

My engagements as a civil society activist and as a lecturer at a university in Tirana gave me many contacts with people in various areas of Tirana, so it was relatively easy to make a list of possible key informants. I started my research in the neighbourhood of Don Bosko in 2011, and after conducting a first small set of interviews, I also included the neighbourhood of Komuna e Parisit (the modification of the sample is explained in the following subsection 3.2.2). I had three key informants, one in Don Bosko and two in Komuna e Parisit, who shared their knowledge of the neighbourhoods, the geographical distribution of migrants and the mapping of the economic conditions within the research sites.

The key informant in Don Bosko was a migrant herself who had come from a northern city in the early 1990s. She worked as a teacher at a nearby elementary school and was also involved in various projects on women's awareness. She was very knowledgeable about the neighbourhood, which helped me immensely to situate my research and to develop my sampling. This key informant was crucial in this mapping exercise. Through her, I contacted my first research participants and then developed the sample basing on the information collected from the key informant and the interviewed women.

After conducting the initial interviews in Don Bosko, I decided to expand my research to Komuna e Parisit to diversify the sample. I recruited two key informants in this neighbourhood as I did not know it very well. One informant had been involved in organising the elections while working for the Central Election Committee conducting the census of the population in this area. She, therefore, had an excellent knowledge of the people living in two central parts of Komuna e Parisit. The second informant for Komuna e Parisit was one of the women that I first contacted for interviews. Her local knowledge, communication skills and large number of contacts in the neighbourhood made her a very helpful informant. She not only provided information about the area but also told me about aspects of everyday life. Although some information could be categorised as gossip, it was invaluable in forming a better understanding of the neighbourhood. The sample in Komuna e Parisit was recruited in the same way as in Don Bosko, snowballing from the information gathered by the key informants and the interviewed women. During interviews, I also kept written and voice fieldwork diaries and notes.

The main research methods chosen were individual in-depth interviews, completed fieldwork diaries and observations, supported by the literature on the themes and topics emerging from the data. The data analysis also involved consultation with colleagues and my supervisor. I

consider these to be a methodological part of the research as they helped me achieve reflexivity upon my research topic.

3.2.2 Sampling

Following a feminist perspective, I decided to work only with women. Doing so does not impede analysing the interrelation of gender and migration (Parreñas 2009; Erel, Morokvasic and Shinozaki 2003). As Parreñas (2001) states, when we speak about women's gendered experiences, we are always already referring to men. Likewise, gender relations imply relations not only between men and women but also among men and among women (Connell 2002). In the same vein, Erel, Morokvasic and Shinozaki (2003) contend that even if we take only female migrants as a direct subject inquiry, their experiences shed light on gendered migration, gendered institutional settings and social arrangements.

As mentioned, I had no limits or preferences regarding the city or village of origin, whether north or south. Likewise, I had no specific age limitations for the participants, other than no younger than 18 years old and no older than 60 years old. The lower limit of 18 years old respected the Albanian civil code's ban on marriage among those younger than 18 years old. The upper limit of 60 years old excluded female old-age pensioners. In qualitative research, participants are selected according to their significance to the research topic not to construct a statistical sample representative of the general population. The aim is to increase complexity by bringing in context, as opposed to reducing complexity by dissolving it into variables (Flick 2009, 91). For my research, I followed a purposive sampling, selecting the participants based on their specific characteristics according to the main objective of the dissertation (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011). However, the sample was developed based on the on-going analysis of the data and not beforehand. I applied several criteria (Morse 1998) while sampling participants: they had to have knowledge and experience of the issue to provide useful insights through their narratives, as well as time to participate in the research (by doing interviews in this case). As mentioned, I approached a few women using my key informants' information and then developed the sample through the snowballing technique. In this nonprobability sampling method, each person interviewed may be asked to suggest additional people for interviewing (Babbie 2013, 129).

I started interviews in Don Bosko with married migrant women who arrived to Tirana after 1991. Following grounded guidelines and consulting the literature and other data sources, I performed a preliminary analysis of the interviews and the data, including primary data from the interviews and secondary data from consulting other research and documents. I noted that other

themes were emerging and that I needed to modify my sampling by adding new categories. For example, in the initial sample, I interviewed only married women who migrated to T irana, but from the interviews with these women and the review of other documents, I learned that a growing number of single women²⁰ were moving to T irana.

When I started my research, my main objective was to interview women migrating to T irana and living in Don Bosko. During the sampling process—through a constant process of analysing data and observations, identifying interesting themes and statements and writing memos (Flick 2009; Hesse-Biber 2007a; Charmaz 2006)—it became clear that focusing only on married women who migrated internally would limit the answers to the main research question about the interrelation of gender and migration. At the same time, internal migration in Albania is very rarely not linked to international migration (Vullnetari 2012). Consequently, I decided to modify the sampling by also including single women who moved on their own (i.e. without the physical presence of their families) and women who migrated internationally. This modification was also in response to an additional research question formed during the research that related to the migratory trajectories of Albanian migrant women.

The final sample includes thirty-two women of different ages involved in migratory processes. One of my aims while doing the sampling was to include women from various regions of the country, including villages, small towns and big cities. The majority of women come from small towns, and four from villages. Only three women lived in extended families at the time of the first migration project, while all the others lived in nuclear families. The low number of extended families reflects their decline, as explained in Chapter 2 on the Albanian context. The economic situation of the participants' families (or families of origin for the women who migrated on their own) is diverse. Educational attainment was another criterion for the sampling. Almost half of these women have achieved education at the university and post-university levels. This was a deliberate aim during the sampling as I wanted to interview women who had migrated for educational purposes. In this case, I sought to diversify the sample by region of origin (north—south, city—town—village). The women who did not migrate for educational purposes have various educational backgrounds (lower secondary—upper secondary—university).

My research objectives began to crystallise during the process of interviewing and analysis, which allowed me to refine my sample configuration. Through the on-going analysis of the interviews, I polished my objectives and turned them into research questions. For example, when

²⁰ In this research, single woman means women not married, not cohabiting and not in stable relationship during the time of the fieldwork.

starting this research, I had no clear objectives such as investigating the migration trajectories of women (as mentioned) or uncovering the tactics they employ during the migratory process and their life in Tirana. This third research question crystallised after analysis of all the interviews. Considering the main themes coming from the data analysis, I expanded the number of sub-questions for each research question to refine the analysis. The process of sampling thus intertwined with that of interviewing and analysis.

Table 4 gives brief general information about the research participants. More details about the participants are presented at the beginning of each analysis chapter.

Table 4: Research participants—brief presentation

Name	Age (years)	City or village of origin	Civil status	Migration type	Economic activity: current/previous	Tirana neighbourhood
Drita	42	Village in Lezhë	Married	Internal	Cleaning lady/unemployed/agriculture	Don Bosko
Eleni	47	Town of Tepelenë	Married	Internal	Domestic worker/unemployed/agriculture	Don Bosko
Eli	39	Village in Fier	Married	Internal	Housewife	Don Bosko
Silvana	58	Town of Lezhë	Married	Internal	Civil servant	Don Bosko
Arjana	51	City of Fier	Married	Internal	Kindergarten educator/teacher	Komuna e Parisit
Zhani	50	City of Fier	Married	Internal	Business owner—small shop	Komuna e Parisit
Manjola	40	City of Vlorë	Married	Internal	Business owner—small shop/unemployed	Komuna e Parisit
Flutura	55	City of Shkodër	Married	Internal	Civil servant	Komuna e Parisit
Eriola	28	Town of Pogradec	Single	Internal	Private television	Komuna e Parisit
Kiara	27	City of Fier	Single	Internal	Psychologist, nongovernmental organisation	Komuna e Parisit
Olisa	28	City of Fier	Single	Internal	Call centre	Don Bosko
Iris	27	Town of Librazhd	Single	Internal	Private television	Don Bosko
Erida	30	Town of Lezhe	Single	Internal	Call centre	Don Bosko
Alba	28	Town of Rrëshen	Single	Internal	Nongovernmental organisation	Don Bosko
Erjona	26	Village in Gjirokastrë	Single	Internal	Law firm	Komuna e Parisit
Marjola	26	City of Fier	Single	Internal	Information technology in a projects office	Komuna e Parisit
Artemisa	30	City of Vlorë	Single	International	Journalist/research assistant	Komuna e Parisit
Beti	31	Town of Diber	Single	International	Lecturer	Don Bosko
Fiona	28	Town of Kukës	Single	International	Lecturer/consultant	Don Bosko
Egesta	35	Town of Lezhë	Single	International	Private television psychologist/travel agent/social worker	Komuna e Parisit
Monika	28	City of Fier	Single	International	Nongovernmental organisation	Don Bosko
Rovena	42	City of Fier	Single	International	Nurse/domestic worker	Don Bosko
Lindita	28	City of Vlora	Single	International	Consultant in a project office	Komuna e Parisit
Irida	36	City of Shkodër	Single	International	Business owner, hairdresser/domestic worker/factory worker	Komuna e Parisit

Marta	34	City of Fier	Divorced	International	Self-employed, tailoring	Don Bosko
Elida	38	Town of Dibër	Married	International	Lecturer	Komuna e Parisit
Migena	40	Town of Pogradec	Married	International	Private bank/babysitter and domestic worker	Don Bosko
Elona	39	Town of Lezhë	Married	International	Business owner, bakery/cleaner and domestic worker	Komuna e Parisit
Juli	38	village near the town of Tepelenë	Divorced	International	Business owner, hairdresser/cleaner and domestic worker	Komuna e Parisit
Denisa	45	City of Gjirokastrë	Married	International	Domestic worker	Komuna e Parisit
Arlinda	46	Town of Kukës	Married	International	Unemployed/domestic worker	Don Bosko
Mimoza	41	Town of Saranda	Married	International	Business owner, dry cleaning/cleaning and domestic worker	Komuna e Parisit

The participants' anonymity was a critical concern respected throughout this research. To preserve anonymity, the names used in this table and in the text are not the participants' real names but good equivalents.

3.2.3 In-depth interviews

Interviewers use in-depth interviewing to explore, not to interrogate.
(Charmaz 2006, 29)

To conduct the interviews, I drew on Charmaz (2006) and Hesse-Biber (2007), who describe feminist interviewing. Charmaz (2006, 26) calls this 'intensive interviewing'; however, I refer to it as 'in-depth' interviewing. 'Intensive interviewing permits an in-depth exploration of a particular topic or experience and, thus, is a useful method for interpretive inquiry' (Charmaz 2006, 26). In-depth interviews are a valuable tool for feminist research to better understand the world of the respondents (Hesse-Biber 2007, 114). It is imperative for feminist scholars to get at the experiences under the surface (Hesse-Biber 2007). In-depth interviewing allows researchers to listen to the voices of women and to grasp their hidden experiences. It gives researchers with access to the participants' ideas, thoughts and memories in their words rather than the words of the researcher. The latter is highly important for the study of women, as 'in this way learning from women is an antidote to centuries of ignoring women's ideas altogether or having men speak for women' (Reinharz 1992, 17).

In-depth interviews are not interrogations but exploration tools. The interviewing resembles a conversation as the interviewer talks less and listens more to explore and understand the respective issues and topics of interest and to discover others (Charmaz 2006). An in-depth interview may be

unstructured (or a loosely guided exploration of topics) (Charmaz 2006, 26), semi-structured or structured (Hesse-Biber 2007, 116) depending on the themes chosen and the methods to explore them.

For this research, I conducted interviews that fell somewhere between the semi-structured and unstructured models. I had an interview guide, a list of written topics (see in Appendices: Interview guiding grid) that I needed to cover to respond to the main research objective and questions. I selected this interview style as I wanted to thoroughly explore the women's experiences but also guide the interview in case it deviated from the main topic. However, I was open to ask new questions based on the information revealed by the participants. The interview agenda was not tightly fixed and allowed time and space for spontaneity, as recommended by Hesse-Biber (2007). However, I followed the principle that interviewing requires some narrowing of the interview topics to gather specific data for developing theoretical frameworks (Charmaz 2006, 29.) I designed my interview guide to capture a broad view but also to be narrow enough to get sufficient data to constructing theory.

Only the preliminary background information questions were specific to gather common information from all the participants, such as their age, civil status and city or village of origin. At the start of the interview, I asked the participants to briefly share this information. Next, I had a list of topics that I needed to cover while leaving room for the participants' stories. My main concern was to occasionally narrow the interview without abruptly interrupt the narrative but directing it to cover the area of interest. Based on Charmaz's (2006) guidelines, I also tried to leave enough space for the participants to speak but was careful to not display a lack of interest, which can be an issue during in-depth interviews.

To conclude this section, I want to recall Denzin and Lincoln's (2005, 643) idea that the interview 'is not a neutral tool, for at least two people create the reality of the interview situation. In this situation, answers are given. Thus, the interview produces situated understandings grounded in specific interactional episodes. This method is influenced by the personal characteristics of the interviewer including race, class, ethnicity, and gender'. Interviews give the researcher more control over the construction of the data than other data collection methods (Charmaz 2006, 28). The way the interview is conducted and the relation between the researcher and the participant then are of paramount importance. Feminist researchers have concluded that it is impossible to have an equal balance of power between the researcher and the participant. This problem, though, can be solved by the researcher exercising reflexivity throughout the interview and the research in general and by following all the ethical principles of conducting interviews. I discuss the interviews in more detail in the following section.

3.2.4 Conducting the interviews

The interviews were semi-structured, with a general guide of questions or topics to be covered and a loose time structure. This structure was further based on the phases of migration laid out by Boyd and Grieco (2003). The interviews covered the pre-migration phase and the transitional process until migrating to Tirana, which is the final destination for the purpose of this research. These differed among the women as some had moved only within Albania, while others also abroad. This reconfirmed the importance of the chosen methodology to bring out the women's different experiences of the migration process. The third part of the narrative, which consumed the most time during the interviews, was the current situation in Tirana. Using mainly open-ended questions and points of discussion, I tried not to force the participants' responses into 'preconceived' categories (Charmaz 2006, 32).

At the end of the interview, I asked some open-ended questions about the participants' perceptions of their situation and expectations and their plans for the future. The purpose was to get not only their thoughts on the current situation but also a summary of their expectations for the whole process of migration, which would provide more information and insights about the process of migration itself. The interviews were all conducted in Albanian. There were no difficulties obtaining consent for the interviews. The only logistical difficulty was setting the time for the interviews. Changes in the agreed-upon time and location of the interviews happened very often. I met all the women informally before the interviews to have a very brief initial meeting and to discuss the time and place of the interview. I also informed them that the interview would last about two hours or even longer so they could have enough time for the interview.

The interviews were conducted in different locations, including the participants' homes and places chosen by them, such as their offices, my house and cafés. One interview was conducted in the main park of Tirana. The interviews with two participants were conducted twice. The participants had to leave earlier, so we set another time for the interviews. I had previously informed the participants about the length of the interview, so I did not set a time limit for them. The interviews lasted until we covered the central themes and migration process. Some interviews lasted for approximately 2 hours, and some for more than 2 hours. The two interviews done in two parts were completed in an overall time of 2½ hours.

At the beginning of the interview, I repeated the research aim and context in more detail to the participants. I also explained the confidence principle, under which the participants' names would be changed, and no details of their job locations, physical appearance or other elements of

identification were written in the data analysis. I additionally promised that the tape-recorded interviews would be heard only by me and kept in a closed secret place so as not to reveal the participants' identity.

The interviews were tape-recorded, with earlier consent for the interview and recording. Tape recording allows the researcher to fully follow the interview and maintain eye contact with the participant. Following the guidelines of grounded interviews, I took notes only to describe a facial expression that seemed necessary for the research or to remark a point I would like to return to and explore further. 'Taking notes on key points during the interview helps as long as jotting notes does not distract you or your participant' (Charmaz 2006, 32).

The interviews were transcribed in Albanian, and the quotations in the dissertation were afterwards translated into English. The interviewing process took place from year 2011 to 2012. During this time, I also extensively used notes and written diaries, some more structured and others less so, to avoid losing ideas, thoughts and other data. I fine-tuned the analysis and writing during 2013–2015 in a constant process of reflexivity (see below section 3.2.6).

3.2.5 Observation

As explained, in-depth interviews were the main source of information, complemented by fieldwork diaries and, to a lesser extent, observation and focus group discussion. Observation in this dissertation was intended to gain knowledge about the neighbourhoods and the participants' houses and workplaces, when possible. I chose to be a passive observant and write my impressions in fieldwork diaries. For instance, while visiting a bakery and a hair salon of two participants, I tried to write down all that I thought relevant to better understand these women's experiences and relations in the family and workplace and with specific institutions.

Some of my notes recorded impressions of the neighbourhoods. I did not have the same relationship to both neighbourhoods as I grew up next to Komuna e Parisit but had little knowledge of Don Bosko. Having known Komuna e Parisit when it was an empty field where I used to play helped me understand more deeply the effects of internal migration and urbanisation. The key informants were useful guides during the observation process, often answering my questions about various neighbourhood-related issues.

3.2.6 Consultations and reflexivity

Benefiting from the non-linearity of the grounded theory methodology, I made use of another source for data collection and analysis: consultation with colleagues and my supervisor. Although this might seem to be a peculiar research method, it greatly benefited my research, particularly data gathering and analysis, as in grounded theory inspired research, these two frequently go together. While analysing the interview data, I also consulted with some experts and my supervisor face to face and via email while not in Albania. These consultations had highly beneficial results, clarifying ideas and thoughts about the research during the data gathering and analysis process and helping me be reflexive during this research. Reflexivity entails the constant examination of the ‘unthought categories of thought which delimit the thinkable and predetermine the thought’ (Bourdieu 1982, 10). The researcher should constantly reflect on biases that may affect construction of the object and ‘scrutinise and neutralise ... the collective scientific unconscious embedded in theories, problems, and [especially national] categories of scholarly judgment’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 40). Moreover, reflexivity is a critical element in feminist research (Hesse-Biber 2007, 2007a; Olesen 2007).

Reflexivity begins with an understanding of the importance of one’s own values and attitudes within the research process and this begins prior to entering the field. Reflexivity means taking a critical look inward—a reflection on one’s own lived reality and experiences, a self-reflection or journey. How does your own biography impact the research process? What shapes the questions you chose to study and your approach to studying them? How does the specific social, economic, and political context in which you reside impact the research process at all levels?’ (Hesse-Biber 2007, 129)

The reflexivity process has been one of my biggest concerns as my work as a woman’s rights activist in Albania likely influenced the data collection and analysis at some point. Knowing that knowledge is affected by the social conditions in which it is produced and that it is based in the social location and the social biography of both the observer and the observed (Hesse-Biber 2007, 131), I sought to minimise the influence of my biases and background on the research as much as possible. By myself but also through consultations with colleagues and through their comments, I attempted to get a good description of how my research was handled and to reflect on my own background, how it was influencing my research and my emotions, worries and feelings—the three levels of reflections according to Olesen (2007, 423). These consultations and discussions often brought me face to face with the ‘unthought categories’ (Bourdieu 1982, 10) expressed in my writing and analysis and encouraged me to scrutinise them, reflect upon them and rewrite.

As explained in the last subsection 3.3 on difficulties and ethical issues, it has been tough to achieve this process of reflexivity, and sometimes I have been unable to notice that I was being influenced by my background and my position. The comments of and discussions of my supervisor and other colleagues enabled me to see these influences on my data analysis, which ultimately was very beneficial. One way to be reflexive is to recognise and present this influence in the data analysis itself (Olesen 2007). Considering that both the participant and the researcher produce data and knowledge (Charmaz 2006), I accordingly present some reflexive thoughts and notes in the analysis.

3.2.7 Data analysis

The data analysis process started at the same time as data collection through interviewing. I must say that I initially found it quite difficult to play with codes, themes and categories. These looked much easier in the handbook than in the field. However, throughout the research, I became more comfortable with analysing the interviews and other types of data.

I started to analyse the data from the first interview with the key information from Don Bosko by noting my thoughts and reflections from the discussions. After the first three interviews, I noted the most interesting themes emerging from them. Additionally, I read new research on gender and migration and re-read other research and data from Albania, which helped me shape the interviews and improve this process. As mentioned, while analysing the interviews and existing research, I noticed that it would be important to modify my sampling and to include single migrant women. For example, this early process of data analysis aided in the creation of sub-samples with common patterns and categories.

I performed thematic coding of the interviews, identifying themes based on the participants' statements and on my readings and background. Moreover, as mentioned, it is impossible to be fully inductive while doing qualitative research; therefore, the process is based on both inductive and deductive analysis (Hesse-Biber 2007, 325). Basing on Mason (2002), I used literal, interpretative and reflexive analyses. Firstly, I tried to read the interviews literally and to write down descriptive information. Ultimately, data analysis was mainly based on interpretive, reflexive reading (Mason 2002, 149). I moreover used two other reading grids for the data: a structural reading and a cultural reading (Erel 2007). Reading the interviews in this way highlighted data about the impact of social structures on people. I also used a cultural reading focused on how the interviewees gave meaning to their experiences (Erel 2007).

As stated, notes and field diaries provided a valuable analytical tool. I did not use any electronic programme to analyse the interviews but did use Post-it notes of various colours to group

the main categories and themes. Making memos was a main data analysis method from the start of the research. Voice and written memos returned me to previous moments of analysis that I had ‘forgotten’ in the next steps. Voice memos captured short thoughts or remarks that I had and did not want to forget. Written memos were structured pieces of writing, including the identification of themes and common patterns. Similarly, after completing each interview, I made summaries of each one, including its main themes, before transcribing it. This helped me compare my summaries with the transcribed interviews and to see what thoughts and interpretation I wrote down about each interview. Going back and reflecting upon the analysis several times, especially after consulting about my writings with my supervisor or colleagues, was extremely beneficial to my research.

3.3 Ethical issues and difficulties

Regarding the ethical issues in doing this research, as stated, I had no difficulties contacting key informants or securing consent for the interviews. Most research participants had already seen me on television or read some of my articles related to gender issues. This exposure helped during the first contact with them to give each one a friendly introduction, but also entailed the risk of influencing the power relationship between the researcher and the participant, of drawing boundaries between me and them. The boundaries between the researcher and the ‘researched’ ‘are not static and are, rather, created in a situational manner’ (Shinozaki 2012, 1810–1811). Attending to multiple positionalities may help the researcher re-draw these boundaries.

First, I clarified that this research would be based on the interviews and the information and stories provided by these women. I thus wanted to emphasise the women’s central role in this research. Second, I presented myself primarily as a doctoral student working on her dissertation to reduce any hierarchical position that could be attributed to my presence in the media. Third, I resorted to my personal experience as an internal and international migrant.

That the participants had heard and read my opinions beforehand raised the risk that they might shape their narratives to fit with what they thought I would appreciate and give me have a favourable impression of them. This happened in only a few cases and was identified through the process of consultation and reflexivity, primarily through discussions with my supervisor.

Another difficult element was my involvement in the interviews. In some cases, the women tried to gain my compassion or involve me in their histories and problems. These moments during the interviews were very challenging as the aim was to get the most information possible about the respondents’ stories and experiences, not turn the interviews into conversations in which I was expected to give solutions. I must say that I was often tempted to jump into the discussion and give

the respondents useful information about the various practical issues they highlighted. To solve this ethical and research dilemma, I told them information about laws or institutions after the interviews, mostly through the key informants. Although I felt compassion for all their stories, not only as a migrant woman myself but especially as a feminist activist, I sought to respect my research agenda and focus on my topics as much as possible. When the respondents discussed thoughts not strictly related to my topics, I did not interrupt them abruptly but decided it was better to prolong the interview a little bit to cover my agenda, rather than disturb the relation with the participant.

An important difficulty faced during the research was my previous knowledge of migration and gender relations in Albania, working with through quantitative data sets. Constructivist ground theory, therefore, was appropriate for my research as it allows for some degree of deduction and a certain level of previous knowledge of the researcher (Vathi 2011). However, from the beginning of the interviews, I noted that my previous research based on quantitative data sets did not interfere with this research, especially in the data gathering process, as these in-depth interviews were almost a complete discovery and fresh exploration for me.

Nevertheless, my feminist perspective made data analysis a real challenge as I frequently fell into the trap of victimology, blurring these women's moments of resistance and agency, which, in fact, was the opposite of what I intended to do. 'Victimologies... tend to create the false impression that women have only been victims, that they have never successfully fought back, that women cannot be effective social agents on behalf of themselves and other' (Harding 1987, 5). However, the research process helped me reflect on this trap and not see inequalities and oppression everywhere, even where I could find agency and resistance. As stated by Flick (2009, 91), 'researchers—partly because of their own theoretical assumptions and structures, which direct their attention to concrete aspects, but also because of their own fears—might remain blind to the structures in the field or person under study. This makes them and their research lose the discovery of the actual "new"'.

Unfortunately, I sometimes fell into this trap, looking at what the data or information at the macro level had shown and neglecting the importance of the experiences of the interviewed women. This research was also a learning and redemptive process for myself, and I attempted to overcome the trap of victimising the research participants through on-going reflexivity. That also helped me focus on their voices and experiences and not on my fears as I sought to discover and understand the actual new.

PART II: GENDERED MIGRATORY TRAJECTORIES OF ALBANIAN WOMEN—ANALYSIS AND MAIN FINDINGS

As mentioned, in its incipient phase, the research for this dissertation was intended to focus only on married migrant women who moved to Tirana after 1991. In the early exploratory phase, while conducting the first interviews and consulting relevant the literature, however, I noted other themes coming to the fore. I modified and expanded the sampling accordingly to reflect on, complicate and do justice to the wide experiences of female migration in Albania (see the methodology chapter 3). The following four chapters presenting the bulk of the data analysis correspond to the four categories of female migration that became visible after the preliminary interviews. I first decided to divide the migrant women in two main groups of internal and international migrants and, subsequently, to subdivide each category once more. The distinction between internal and international migration is necessary as despite overlapping patterns of internal and international migration, crossing country borders is a significant move for Albanian citizens. Whereas they can freely move internally, Albanian citizens have to comply with visa regimes and migration policies if they intend to enter other countries. I, therefore, first separated the sample into two broad groups: women who migrated only internally (chapters 4 and 5) and women who engaged in international, internal, circular and return migration (chapters 6 and 7).

Chapter 4 examines the experiences of the group on which I initially planned to focus: married women who moved internally to Tirana. As mentioned, during the fieldwork and analysis, I noted that the number of single women migrating on their own to Tirana for educational purposes had been on the rise for a while. Nevertheless, they remain an under-researched group in the context of the Albanian migration. I, therefore, opted to have a separate group including only female students who migrated internally on their own, without the physical presence of their families. This group is analysed in Chapter 5. Regarding international migrants, after the preliminary analysis of the interviews, I decided to categorise them based on their migration purpose: women who migrated for educational purposes and those who had migrated for various other reasons. Chapter 6 analyses the experiences of women who migrated internationally for purposes other than education, and Chapter 7 explores the experiences of international student migrants.

The common feature of all the thirty-two researched women is that they were involved in internal or multiple migratory trajectories, but at the time of the fieldwork, all lived in Tirana. The sample was not divided into these four groups with the aim of drawing comparisons between them. Instead, I highlight the peculiarities of Albanian female migrants to see what their specific experiences can tell about the social processes in regards to migration and gender

All four chapters in the Part Two are structured following the model proposed by Boyd and Grieco (2003). The purpose of this research is to track the trajectories of women migrants in Albania, so Boyd and Grieco's (2003) model seemed well suited to understand the movements I targeted. All these chapters are analysed according to a three-phase division: pre-migration phase, transition phase and destination phase. The first, the pre-migration phase focuses on the decision-making process, and the accompanying negotiations and the influence of individual, familial and structural factors on migration decisions. The second consists of the transition across intra and/or inter-state borders. This phase is longer for international migrants as it includes their international experiences until their return to Tirana. The third sub-section of each chapter investigates these migrant women's experiences once they settled in Tirana, considered to be the destination city for the purpose of this dissertation. At the end of each chapter, I summarise and expand upon the main findings.

Chapter 4: ‘That was our move for a better life, for our children to have a good education’—married women migrating to Tirana

This chapter explores the trajectories of married women who migrated internally to Tirana. The data are drawn from interviews conducted with women, the majority of whom had already married when Communism collapsed. These women provide peculiar insights as they stand on the verge and link the period of late communism and the post-communist period. The narratives of the following eight women are discussed and analysed at length in this chapter,

Drita, 40 years old, was born in a village near Lezhe, a city in northern Albania. Her husband and his brother migrated to Greece in 1991. Shortly after, in 1992, Drita migrated to Tirana with her parents-in-law and sister-in-law (the wife of her husband’s brother). At the time of internal migration to Tirana, Drita had no children. In 2007, her husband returned to Tirana, and at the time of the research, in 2012, he worked in construction, an unstable job. Drita has completed secondary education. Before moving to Tirana, she worked for a short period in the cooperative, and after that, she withdrew from the labour market for a long time. In Tirana, at the time of the research, she was employed as a domestic care worker for a couple of young professionals. With her husband and son, born after moving to Tirana, she shared the third floor of a house in Don Bosko, constructed with the remittances sent by her husband and his brother. Her parents-, sister- and brother-in-law reside in the same premises on the first and second floors, respectively.

Eli is a 39-year-old woman from a village near Fier in central-southern Albania. Her husband migrated to Greece in 1994, and four years later, in 1998, she migrated to Tirana with her daughter, parents-in-law and sisters-in-law (her husband’s sister and the wife of a brother with two children). At the time of the research, in 2012, Eli’s husband still lived and worked in Greece. She has completed lower secondary education and has never been employed in either Tirana or her place of origin. In 2012, she and her daughters (one born in Fier and the younger one in Tirana) shared a floor of a house constructed with the remittances sent by her husband and his brothers in Don Bosko. Her parents-in-law lived on the first floor of the house, and her brother-in-law wife and two children on the second floor. On the third floor were two apartments, the one where Eli and her daughters lived and the second for another brother-in-law. This apartment was empty most of the time as her this brother-in-law was married to an Albanian migrant in Greece and, as of 2012, did not plan to return to Albania. The sister of Eli’s husband was married and lived with her husband in another neighbourhood of Tirana.

Manjola, 40 years old, is a native of the city of Vlore, along the southern coast. Her husband migrated first to Greece in 1997 after the collapse of the Albanian pyramid Ponzi schemes. In 2001,

she migrated in Tirana with her children and her mother, who cared for the children. A couple of years later, Manjola's husband returned from emigration and joined the family. In 2012, they ran a small trading business together. Manjola graduated from university with a degree in economics but had not been employed before migrating to Tirana. She lived with son, daughter and husband in an owned apartment in Komuna e Parisit.

Arjana, 51 years old, is a native of the city of Fier. She migrated to Tirana with her husband and two children in 2004. She is a university graduate and worked as an elementary school teacher in her hometown of Fier. In 2012, she was employed as an educator in a private kindergarten in Tirana, and her husband had found work with a private company. In 2012, she lived in Komuna e Parisit with her son and daughter, who were both students at the University of Tirana.

Flutura, 55 years old, is a native of the city Shkoder in northern Albania. She migrated to Tirana with her husband and their two daughters in 2002. A university graduate, Flutura in 2012 worked in public administration, and her husband as a television journalist in Tirana. At the time of the interview, one of her daughters worked in Tirana, while the other one had moved to Italy to study. Flutura lived with her husband and one daughter in an owned apartment in Komuna e Parisit.

Silvana, 55 years old, is a native of the town of Lezhe. Her husband migrated to Tirana in 1992, and two years later, in 1994, she joined him with their children. She is a university graduate, and before moving to Tirana, she worked in the local administration in Lezhe. In 2012, both she and her husband worked for the central public administration. At the time of the interview, she lived with her husband and one daughter in an owned apartment in Don Bosko. Her other daughter had migrated to France for study purposes. Later, I heard that the other daughter also migrated abroad.

Zhani, 50 years old, comes from the city of Fier and graduated from high school. She migrated to Tirana before her husband and two daughters to facilitate their migration. They followed one year later, in 2004. As of 2012, Zhani was self-employed and owned a small shop. She ran it with her husband, who was responsible for the trading part. Of her two daughters, one was studying at university, while the other was unemployed as of 2012. Zhani lived with her husband and the two daughters in an owned apartment in Komuna e Parisit.

Eleni, 47 years old, is a native of the small town of Tepelene in southern Albania. Her husband migrated to Greece in 1993, and after his return in 2003, they, along their son and two daughters, migrated to Tirana. Eleni has completed secondary education and worked as a domestic care worker in 2012. Her husband was unemployed due to the crisis in the construction sector. She lived with her two daughters, son and husband in an owned apartment in Don Bosko. One daughter was pursuing doctoral studies in Tirana. The son and the other daughter had graduated, and in 2012,

the son worked as a salesperson, but the daughter was jobless. As I heard later, the unemployed daughter had a master's in political sciences and was employed in a call centre at the end of 2014.

These short descriptions of the interviewees' partners highlight that what is commonly subsumed under the concept of internal migration, in fact, includes a variety of different, dynamic mobility configurations. Among these configurations, first we see that the husbands migrate abroad, while the wives—with the children and parents-in-law—move to Tirana. Secondly, entire households move to Tirana in the same time. The third scenario consists of women being the primary migrants to Tirana while the husbands and children follow. These configurations are explored in-depth in the following analytical chapters.

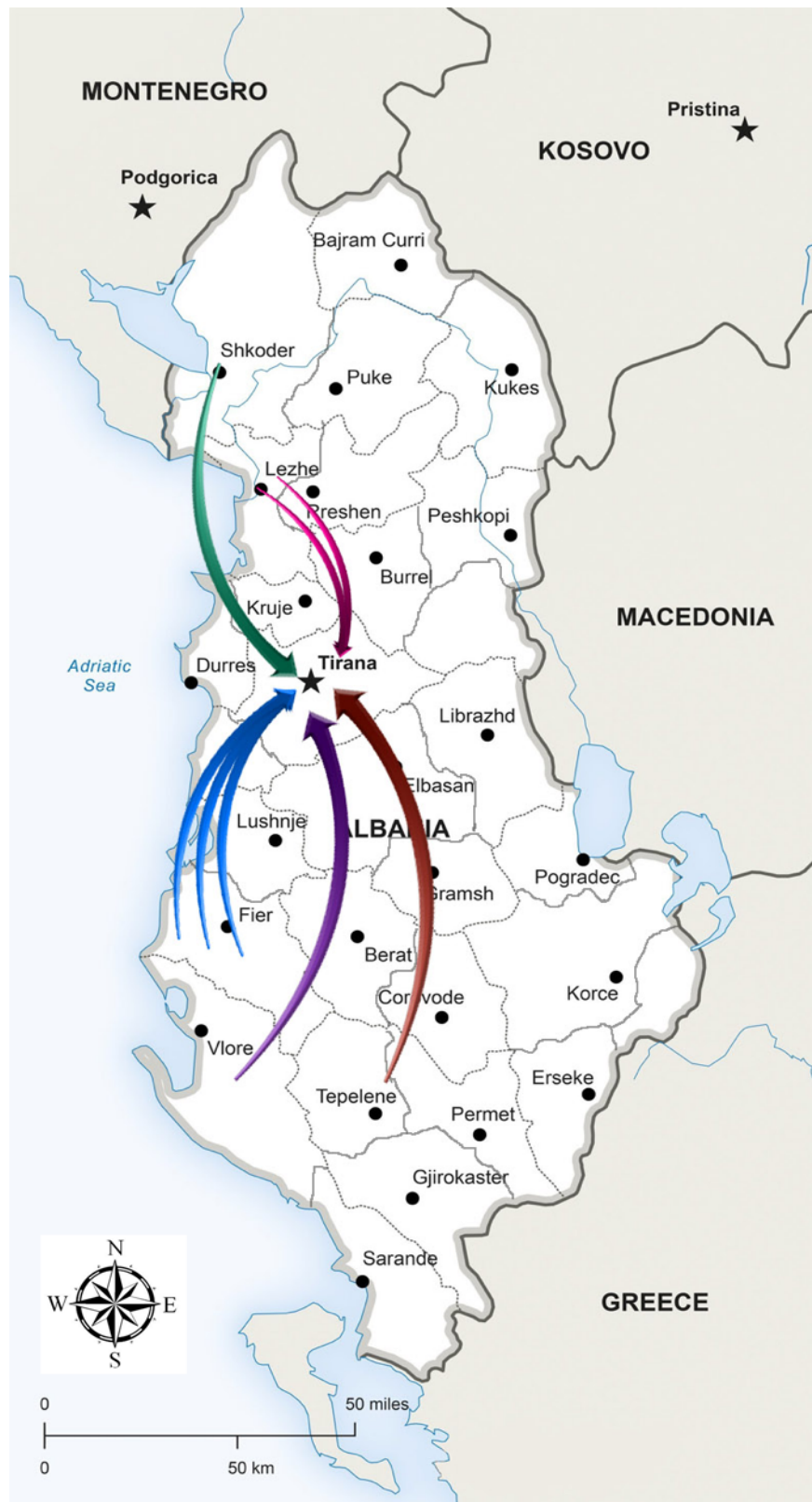


Figure 6: Migration trajectories of 'internal married migrant women'.
Source: Map adapted by Taulant Topçiu for the purpose of this dissertation

4.1 Pre-migration: life in the cities and villages of origin

4.1.1 Migration of husbands

Two significant moments may be observed in the cases where the husband migrates to Greece, and the wife—along with the children and sometimes the parents-in-law—migrate internally later. The first moment concerns the migration of the husband. The second moment includes the movement of the women themselves, whether with other members of the extended family or only with their own children.

Let us first turn to the migration decision of the husbands going abroad and the role of the women in these decision processes. Drita tells:

I was unemployed. ... Before demokracia²¹, we were all employed in the local cooperative. We were penniless, just like everyone else. After that, things became more difficult. ... I was very young to fully grasp the situation. I recall my parents-in-law and my husband being anxious because suddenly we found ourselves with no income. I was very young. ... Then my husband emigrated. Everybody was trying to leave, in fact. What else was there to be done? We had nothing If I remember right, a group of men left first. My husband told me he had no other choice: either emigrate or steal so that we would be able to live. It was very difficult for me as we were a young couple, but there was nothing I could do. It was the only way. We had no hope. I just told him to be careful and to keep in contact if possible. That was all I was able to say.

Not only did Drita find her husband leaving to be difficult, but she furthermore expresses a feeling of being powerless, of not being unable to prevent her husband from going abroad. She recalls that at this time, she was very young and could not grasp the complexity of the situation. At that time, Drita was living in the household of her husband, along with her parents-in-law, brother-in-law and his wife and child. The literature (Ekonomi et al. 2004; Kaser 2014; King and Vullnetari 2012) describes such extended patrilocal families, of which Drita was part, as following a particular hierarchy, which might partly reflect the dynamics of this migration decision process. In such patrilocal households, where wives move after marriage into the house of the husband and the parents-in-law (and sometimes the husband's brother) (Kaser 2014), hierarchies are organised by age, gender and generation (King and Vullnetari 2012). In the decision-making processes, the oldest

²¹ Some of the women interviewed use the term *demokracia* [democracy] to refer to the post-1991 changes in Albania. This usage frequently occurs in everyday communication in Albania, where many people also refer to this period as *tranzicioni*.

man—here, the husband's father (sometimes with his wife)—has the most say within the household (Gjermei 2004). The sons have some weight, while wives and daughters are less involved in decision-making processes. This combination of seniority, individual (age) and family factors led Drita's husband to leave the household and migrate and affected her non-participation in her husband's migration decision.

Eli describes a similar process:

The situation was dire prior to coming to Tirana. ... We [Eli and her husband] were living with my husband's parents. ... He [Eli's husband] had already discussed with his father and his brothers.... I didn't know what was going on, when suddenly my husband said one day, 'We're going to Greece with a group of young men. They know the route, but you should stay here with my parents'. That was more or less what he told me, and then he left for Greece that very same day in 1994. I recall crying all night long, feeling lost. We were facing many challenges. We had a little daughter, and it was so difficult for me, and for us all, because we were poor. When he left, I felt totally shattered. His two other brothers left too. I was living with his parents, a younger sister and a sister-in-law.... We were trying to survive there in the village doing our usual work.

We see that in both cases, migration was—as has been abundantly shown in studies (Stark and Bloom 1985; Root and de Jong 1991; Lauby and Stark 1988)—a household decision rather than an individual decision. Again, Eli, similarly to Drita in these household configurations, was literally excluded from the husband's decision to leave to Greece. However, the process is more complicated than this. The interviewees reveal that these decision-making processes cannot be reduced to traditional patriarchal culture, respectively to the structure of extended families. Instead, it seems that the economic collapse of immediate post-communist period reinvigorated such power patterns within households. International migration was and is considered to be a solution to improve the very difficult economic situations in which these migrants live and can be considered to be a diversifying, risk-minimising household strategy (Stark and Bloom 1985; Stark and Taylor 1991).

After the fall of communism, not only men but also women, like Drita, who had been involved in the labour market, found themselves jobless. Even as many state factories and enterprises closed, the social services provided by the state deteriorated. In rural areas, cooperatives were dismantled, and under law Nr 7501 of July 1991, the land was distributed to the inhabitants of the villages, allowing them to become landowners (Stahl 2012). Nevertheless, these residents were penniless and did not have the means to work the land and reap its benefits. The situation in the

villages was difficult for both men and women as they had no opportunities other than working the land, as the case for Drita and Eli. Drita describes the situation in the rural areas:

Sometimes after my husband's emigration, I remembered that we had become owners of a piece of land as the cooperatives had ceased to exist. My parents-in-law and I were working the land so that we could have something to eat, and after that, I was working in the house. Whereas my sister-in-law was working more in the house as she had a small child. She had to take care of the baby, too.... it was so difficult because you cannot work the land like that, with no means and by yourself.... I just cannot fathom how we managed to live at that time.

Women's situation in rural areas became harder due to the post-communist rapid decline of social services, including child care and health care structures (Gjermani 2004; Danaj et al. 2008). Regarding social services in the early nineties, there were no more nurseries or kindergartens, both in rural and urban areas. Whereas in 1990 more than 1 in 2 three- to five-year-old children was enrolled in preschool in 1990, less than 1 in 3 was enrolled in 2004 (Social Research Center 2004). Migrating in any form was viewed as a solution to the economic and social difficulties of this period. In this situation, extended households based their decision-making processes on revitalised ideas of gender and seniority.

Women in urban areas faced similar situations. Eleni describes this situation:

When demokracia came, we were laid off because my husband was working in the cooperative adjacent to the city (Tepelene), and it suddenly ceased to exist. The factory where I was working at was closed down as well. I didn't know the reason, but we were told that there were no more factories. How we could live like this? Yes, you shut down the factory, but where should we go?!! Whom could we ask for explanations? Everybody was like us, laid off. And above all, we had three little children. Only the older child was in school age. The others were younger, so they were staying at home. As a matter of fact, it was not even a home. It was just a room because we resided in a shared apartment with another family [a couple with two children with no kinship relations to Eleni], and we had one room, and the other family was living in the other. Until 1993, we managed to survive and to have food because my husband continued to work in the village. He was able to have some money from time to time. My family [Eleni's mother and brother] back in the village also helped with food, mostly with milk. I was at home with the children.

Eleni explains that in the early 1990s, she found herself constrained within the house to care for the children. The kindergartens no longer existed, and the factory where she used to work closed. In

other words, the collapse of the communist system—with its state feminist perspective—confined women to their role of caregivers and took them out of the labour market.

The mass privatisation that followed in 1992 wrought enormous changes in the structure of the labour market. Women withdrew from the labour market in significant numbers (UN Albania 2004), and men began to adapt to the new market economy through migration and entrepreneurship. In these very difficult economic and social conditions, the decision to migrate seemed inevitable for men, even more so once migration became a mass phenomenon and reinforced what Stark and Taylor (1991) call relative deprivation. In this situation, people and households migrate not only to maximise their absolute incomes but also to improve their position relevant to other reference groups. Such comparisons and the desire to improve one's relative position are significant elements in the decision-making process to migrate.

International migration was seen mostly as men's affair, while women stayed at home caring for the children. The risky and illegal ways emigrants left Albania, as described by Vullnetari (2012), further masculinised perceptions of immigration. Mostly men migrated to Greece by crossing the borders through the mountains on foot (Vaious 2002; Vullnetari 2009, 2012). A heroic narrative of migration as dangerous and exhausting, qualities often associated with masculinity, may be seen in Eleni's narration:

Then, in 1993, he [Eleni's husband] took the mountain route to Greece, seven days and seven nights walking in the mountains. They were not aware of anything at that time, where the roads led to, nothing. We had no other choice, except for him to emigrate. Where would we be able to find the money to live?!!! ... If he didn't leave for Greece, we would have nothing at all. No other ways were possible in order to obtain income.

Eleni clearly participated in the decision-making process regarding potential migration of her husband. However, she recurred to transnational gender representation of the man's role as the breadwinner and the woman's role as the care-giver.

International migration by husbands and internal migration by families was not unique to the early 1990s. Another significant migration movement followed the crash of the financial pyramid schemes in 1997, as shown in the research of Korovilas (1999) and Musaraj (2011). Manjola tells:

It was like the destruction of all hopes. It was like a rupture with what we had hoped and dreamt prior to 1997. It was like 'boom'. ... Everything disappears, and you start from the beginning. ... My husband had worked in the municipality of Vlora. I was not working because our son was two years old, and I was pregnant again. ... My parents were in sound financial standing as they were both working and saving all

the time, as parents usually do [laughs], so they were helping us. ... They lost a lot of money in the pyramid schemes, thankfully, not all of it. Then, after the events at Vlora in 1997, we thought that migrating was the best thing to do. I could not leave at that moment because of the children. That was a period in which people from the south were moving because of the mess, in addition to the border issue with Greece. We thought, 'The time has come. Let us try something else as here, God knows when things will be fixed again'. ... Agron [Manjola's husband] left in October of 1997.

Like Eleni, Manjola was clearly involved and engaged in the decision-making process regarding her husband going abroad as they lived in a nuclear family structure. However, again, the outcome of the process—a configuration in which women care for the children and men migrate abroad to win the bread—shows how migration is embedded in gender representations. Even after the state feminism in which women were involved in the labour market, a remobilisation of the traditional gender division of roles occurred after the fall of communism in Albania.

4.1.2 While husbands were abroad

The women's experiences while their spouses were abroad differed by their economic activity, social relations and family structure, among other factors. Although the women had responsibility for taking care of the children, the housework and, in many cases, their husband's families, their statements do not reflect the same heroism they ascribe to their husbands' migration. Eleni says:

He [Eleni's husband] was sending money, and I was taking care of the children. The children were very young at that time. I was taking care of everything, dealing with all the issues that arise from having children. I was alone. ... My mother and brother lived in a village near Tepelene. It was impossible to visit with them often. The same with my husband's parents and brother. I could only rely on the neighbours, the majority of whom were also people from the villages around Tepelene. They were poor people like us. Sometimes they helped out with children, sometimes with food. We helped each other as much as possible.

This quotation shows that Eleni took care of everything related to the household and had to overcome any difficulty by herself while her husband was away. Men could migrate only as women took charge of the family care and housework. Social relations, in this case, neighbour networks, were a great support.

We go back to Eleni:

I sometimes did handcrafting. I worked at home and then sold the work in Gjirokaster [the city adjacent to Tepelene, a more central hub]. My neighbour from a village in Gjirokaster helped me sell some of the handcrafts. Little things, very little money, but better than nothing.

In the case of Eleni, neighbour networks allowed her to generate some additional income in a time of acute economic constraints for herself and her children. Her story shows also how Eleni tried to adjust to the new economic opportunities by mobilising her skills of handcrafting, an activity that women in Albania usually do for free as a female hobby. This change illustrates how women's skills gained new value in the market environment and provided new income opportunities, as found by Gal and Kligman (2000) in the case of the multiple entrepreneurial initiatives by women in post-socialist space.

In addition to neighbour networks, parents often took on new roles while husbands went abroad, as the case of Manjola illustrates:

It would have not been wise for me to stay at home alone with my son while pregnant. I thought it was better to go to my parents; they had enough space for me. At first, I thought to stay only some months following the birth of my daughter. But I changed my plans along the way [laughs] ... as it was very comfortable for me to stay there. My parents were helping me all the time.

Sometimes, women also mobilised these networks to find additional ways to earn money. For instance, Manjola stated in the interview that she had an opportunity to rent their apartment (her and her husband's), so she decided to live with her parents for longer than planned to have some income in addition to what her husband earned in Greece. As both cases illustrate, the women not only had to deal with all difficulties related to their children and households, but they also make efforts to improve their financial situation, even though their husbands abroad were in charge of earning money for their families.

4.1.3 Next step: migrating to Tirana

Regarding internal migration to Tirana, the same questions arise: why was Tirana an option, and what roles did the women have in this migration decision-making process? Overall, the interviews reveal multiple reasons why Tirana appeared feasible as a migration destination, and

again, women's role in the decision-making processes seems to have been heavily influenced by the household structure.

Tirana was not always the women's desired destination, as Eli tells, but it was often the best available option.

We moved to Tirana in 1998. ... My husband and his brothers didn't want to go to a city other than Tirana. In fact, they didn't mean to return [to Albania] at all, but it was mainly because of my father-in-law. My father-in-law didn't want to move to Greece. He didn't wish to move at all, in fact. But in order to please my husband, he decided that we would no longer live in the village in Fier. ... Eventually, my parents-in-law agreed to move to Tirana. I would have preferred to go to Greece, but the situation was such. We could not leave my parents-in-law alone in Albania, so Tirana was a fine option, too. At least we managed to leave the village and raise our daughters here in Tirana. After 1997, it was obvious that we had to move as our village emptied out fast. Some families moved to Greece, and some others to Tirana.

Again, we see that in this particular household structure, Eli was only marginally involved in the decision-making as her parents-in-law and husband had more weight. Also, as their neighbours left, the feeling of relative deprivation was growing. Tirana was the best option that allowed maintaining the household structure while not challenging the decision-making power of the parents-in-law.

Tirana was also a feasible destination in terms of chain migration as migration there generally provided access to some support. People moved internally to areas where others from their villages and cities had already settled. Here is a form of chain migration in Albanian internal migration, as analysed in depth by Çaro (2011) and Vullnetari (2014). People willing to migrate followed their relatives or friends to the same destination area (Çaro 2011, 111), and often entire neighbourhoods in the host areas were established along kin and friends' relations (Vullnetari 2014, 56). We may find an illustration in the words of Drita:

A year had passed when my husband and his brother started regularly sending us money. This was something helpful, and we were somewhat relieved. However, they had already told my father-in-law to inquire about how to move to Tirana and not spend all the money in the village [laughs]. There were some people from our village who had moved there [to Tirana], so we would not be alone. Moving to Tirana was a good option, they were told by the people that had already moved there.

Drita adds that acquaintances from their village who had settled in Tirana helped them find a piece of land on which to construct their house. Eli speaks of a similar case, in which some relatives had

already settled in the Don Bosko area. She tells that her husband and brothers-in-law constructed a house on land next to their relatives. Here again, we see that, similar to the decision-making processes for the husbands to go abroad, the particular household structure only marginally involved the women in this decision-making process.

A distinct case of internal migration and women's role in it comes from Manjola, who says that she did not consider migrating to Tirana at first, but it was she who finally decided to make the move. In this case, Tirana was a pull factor due to its fast development.

My husband and I had no clear plans. We knew, though, that he would be working in Greece for a time, and then he would return. But my understanding at the beginning of 2000s was that Tirana was developing at a high speed, while things in Vlora were not changing as much, so I decided to give Tirana a try. I didn't know what was awaiting me there, but it was a comforting feeling knowing that if I had to, I could return at any time to Vlora to my parents. I was very optimistic. Agron was not so much, but he was exhausted from being all alone, by himself and far away from us. So we decided that it would be better if I first went to Tirana, gather some experiences, and he would join later.

Manjola negotiated the decision with her husband: she would be the first to migrate to Tirana, along with the children, and he would follow later. A similar case is Eleni, who also negotiated the decision to go to Tirana within the family.

My son had to go to Tirana to study. When my husband returned from Greece for a couple of weeks, we all gathered to discuss what we should do next. Our daughters too would attend university soon. They were even open to discussing any alternative to this. There was the university in Gjirokastra too, but it was not as popular as in Tirana, and we wanted the best for our children. My husband was planning on coming back. We had to decide if we wanted to separate from our kids, some in Tepelene and some in Tirana, and have so many expenditures or whether it was better to all go to Tirana and live together. Nothing was keeping us in Tepelene. I had no job. Chances were my husband would have been unemployed, too, as life in the city was getting worse. In Tirana, at least we would be all together, and maybe our children would find jobs later, so in 2003, we all moved to Tirana. That was our move for a better life, for our children so that they would have a good education.

Children's education is also highlighted by interviewees, including Silvana, Arjana and Zhani. Silvana tells that her life in the city of Lezhe was not very difficult, and her husband and she were both employed in relatively good jobs. Nevertheless, Silvana states:

Shortly after the system started changing, we began contemplating about moving to Tirana. At that time, we didn't think that it was really meant for us. We managed to have an ordinary life at that moment, and it looked as if a small city such as Lezha was far more secure than Tirana. Tirana was getting very messy at that time. But we were thinking about our two daughters. They were doing very well at school, and they were learning foreign languages. Being in Tirana would be easier for them as they would have excellent opportunities to go abroad for schooling.

As seen in the other excerpts, Tirana was perceived as a city that offered more educational opportunities—moreover, a step closer to the international educational opportunities for children. For some couples, this move itself brought many challenges, especially regarding finances and home-buying. However, the objective of providing more educational opportunities for their children trumped financial insecurities. This is illustrated by what Arjana and Zhani, both living in nuclear-family household, say in their interviews:

Arjana: My husband was an army officer during Enver's period.²² He found himself jobless in 1991. He somehow managed to find work here and there in the first years of the 90s. Since officers had lost their raison d'être, we knew that any job would be good enough. In Fier, I was working as a teacher, and I managed to keep my job. The salaries for teachers were not that great, so financially speaking, we were not in good standing. We were not quite starving, but the money was not there to only fill your stomach. We were constantly thinking about our children. At that time, they were attending high school and they would soon to go to university [in Tirana] or maybe abroad. This was our reason for moving to Tirana. With the help of some friends, my husband found a job in a private firm. It was well paid. I was aware that I would not find another job as a teacher again. Whatever job would have been just fine. Truth be told, I was not thinking too much about this. Our goal was to provide more opportunities for our children. Moving to Tirana seemed the right decision for us. ... In fact, we were quite late in the game. We should have done this much earlier at a time when we were still young. Despite of all this, we moved, and here we are.

Zhani: When our daughters went to high school, we started to think about moving to Tirana because of the universities and because here, they might find better jobs than in Fier. ... But we wanted to be cautious and not get into any adventures in Tirana. In order to continue keeping our shop in Fier and give the new one [shop] a try in Tirana, we thought it would be best for my husband to stay in Fier, and I would move to

²² The names Albanians call the period of the communist regime include Enver's time, Enver's period and monism.

Tirana as I could stay at my cousin's place. My daughters were attending high school at that time, and they were old enough to care for themselves and take care of the house.

These quotations both raise different points which deserve comment. First, both women were clearly involved in the decision to leave for Tirana and had decision-making power. Second, in both cases, we see that Tirana was a feasible option due to pre-existing relations which offered support. In the case of Arjana, a friend opened an avenue to a job for her husband in Tirana. Zhani could live at her cousin's home for free and check out the situation. Third, Zhani could leave as the family's first migrant as her daughters were old enough to run the house by themselves. Her daughters, in turn, replaced her in reproductive care work.

We see that the nuclear family structure allowed women significant influence and decision-making power in contrast to women in extended families. Interestingly, whereas men migrated abroad mainly for economic reasons, as shown in the interviews, children's education appears to have been a significant motivation for internal migration to Tirana, as emphasised by Eleni, Zhani, Silvana, Arjana and Eli, who discuss the importance of raising their children in Tirana. Compared to international migration, Tirana was simply a more achievable option, particularly due to pre-existing relationships with relatives, friends and acquaintances. Various types of social networks—friends, acquaintances, kinship and parents—were mobilised to provide assistance (e.g. accommodations or employment) to achieve the move to Tirana. In the following section, I go into more detail about the role of these social networks.

4.2 Moving to Tirana

The interviews show that in the move to Tirana, social networks played a highly important role and provided a wide range of social support. Clearly, the time of migration to Tirana was an important factor. Internal migration in the early 1990s was characterised by less knowledge about the place of destination, fewer social networks in the destination and consequently more insecurity about what would happen in this new location. For instance, Drita, who migrated to Tirana in 1992, tells that villagers and cousins who had already migrated to Tirana shared the necessary information about land to construct a house and other practical advice:

... Some cousins of my mother-in-law told her what was most necessary to take with us and to sell the rest of the things (clothes and furniture) because money would be quite useful in Tirana... I had no idea where we were going to live and how it would be there.

The other interviewees left later and could rely more on social relations and information. In the case of Eli, her husband and brothers-in-law had gone to Tirana to deal with accommodations and other matters, and the rest of the family later followed:

They [Eli's husband and brothers-in-law] came back for a few months to arrange things with the house and so on. They were staying in Tirana and first built a tiny house so that we would not have to live under the open sky. After some time, they came back to Fier, and we moved all together to Tirana. A few days later, they left again for Greece as they had to work, and we also needed money to live and to add some rooms to the house.

In the interviews, it is also striking, although it corresponds to the results in the previous section, that women living in nuclear families were far more knowledgeable about the city. They had gathered information from family and social networks or gone there themselves to evaluate the situation. Manjola is an illustrative case:

I thought to buy two small apartments, one to live in and another on the first floor to use as a small shop, as we needed income. ... My parents were caring for my children as I was going to Tirana to deal with search for apartments and all the procedures to follow, and a cousin of mine drove me back and forth as I wanted to go in the morning and return to Vlora on the same day.

Manjola organised the process of moving to Tirana, handling not only logistical matters but also strategy to prepare to settle down. She relied on her mother, who took care of her children, and on her cousin, who drove her. This assistance again illustrates how deeply migration decisions were embedded in wider family networks. However, to find a job in Tirana, Manjola needed social networks but lacked them at this time. Thus, she found another way to overcome this obstacle: by turning to self-employment. She used her available financial resources given her lack of social networks in the destination place. With the money she had saved from renting her apartment in Vlora and from the remittances sent by her husband, she bought two small apartments, one to live in and one to turn into a shop, which she still ran with her husband at the time of the interview in late 2011.

Other women prepared for migration to Tirana through asking for the direct and indirect support of kin and friends. These persons—friends, cousins and parents—were important for access to living spaces, apartments, houses and even investment opportunities. As Flutura states:

He [Flutura's husband] found an apartment through the friends and acquaintances he had in Tirana. It was not as big as the apartment we had in Shkoder, but here [in Tirana], it was more expensive, and we could not afford a better one.

Zhani tells of similar issues:

I had some cousins in Tirana who had found a space for rent on the first floor of a building. They asked if we wanted to join and share the rent and space as I had a shop in Fier, and they knew that we were planning on going to Tirana. I could have my own shop now in Tirana and continue the same activity.

Also, Zhani tells that her cousins in Tirana hosted her until she could find an apartment for her family and herself. In this case, kinship networks served to ameliorate and share the risks of economic investments and the internal migration process. Silvana recounts a similar situation, showing the role of the family and relatives in accessing living space in Tirana:

The search for a house to live in turned out to be problematic as apartments in Tirana were very expensive compared to Lezha. Even if we had sold our apartment in Lezha, the money would have not sufficed. But my family [Silvana's parents]) was willing to host us for an undetermined period of time until we could find an apartment.

Discussing internal migration to the municipality of Kamza, Çaro (2011, 184) highlights that migrants relied on their own resources throughout the process and received little support from municipalities or other state structures. Gjermani (2004) and De Waal (2005) describe similar situations. The process of moving to Tirana was organised through the mobilisation of social networks to obtain housing and employment, as frequently highlighted in this chapter and the following ones. Furthermore, the population growth on the peripheries of Tirana (that were mainly empty spaces before 1990) and the overpopulation of Tirana did not lead to appropriate development of road infrastructure, schools, health care centres or laws. For instance, for a long time, migrants to Tirana or its peripheries could not be registered in the Offices of Civil Registry, so they could not enrol their children in school or benefit from the labour offices services (Social Research Centre 2004).

4.3 Balancing opportunities and constraints: the experiences of internal migrant women in Tirana

Analysing experiences of internal migrant women allows exploring the opportunities and the constraints they faced in Tirana. These included the difficulties when beginning the settling process and the strategies and the resources the interviewees mobilised to face the new social reality in Tirana. The first period of settling involved difficulties related to the new, unfamiliar environment, nostalgia for the city or village of origin and to the new everyday life practices and structural difficulties. The living conditions in the early period of settlement in Tirana were often not as good as expected, and for some, this seemed a major deception. As Drita says:

The initial time in Tirana was very challenging. Our first house was terrible. I could have never imagined life in such a house. Why had we moved here to live under these conditions? However, after a few months, things started to change as we had begun construction on a new house. My husband and his brother had contracted some workers here in the area to build our house. They were migrants like us, but they were working here, not abroad.

At the beginning of their stay in Tirana, many internal migrants dealt with everyday difficulties due to the lack of infrastructure in the newly populated areas, as shown in the research of Gjermani (2004) and Çaro (2011). Eleni describes such a situation:

I was climbing eight floors every day, even twice a day, carrying water and food. ... The building had a place for an elevator, but it was never built. The builder said he was going to solve this, and then he asked us for money. But we were all newcomers in this building, and if we had money, we would have found another building, not this one. ... In the beginning, the electricity was unsteady as there were no regular electricity lines but wires that were connected in a messy way by the inhabitants themselves. ... I had to wash clothes by hand, but we didn't even have water.

The disillusionment many women experienced at the beginning of settling is also explored in Gjermani's (2004) research on internal migration to the area of Bathore, next to Tirana. A lack of adequate infrastructure, electricity and water but many muddy pathways were most difficult for women in charge of the reproductive work. A similar situation of women overburdened by a lack of facilities, such as water and electricity, is also reported by Danaj et al. (2008), who held focus group discussions with women in Tirana and other urban areas of Albania. Despite inadequate

infrastructure and facilities, improvements have been made in some areas, such as the newly created municipality of Kamza, a former periphery of Tirana populated by migrants (Çaro 2011). Nevertheless, the continuous internal migration to Tirana has spurred continuous construction in Don Bosko and Komuna e Parisit, hindering improvement of the infrastructure in these areas.

4.3.1 Accessing the labour market in Tirana: the double face of informality

Economic activity was a major concern for some interviewees as life in Tirana imposed on them new economic constraints. This subsection scrutinises the experiences of the interviewees who attempted to find jobs in Tirana, noting the main challenges they faced and the ways they overcame them. The interviewees make major points about access to the labour market related to its informal nature in Albania. Labour market informality became tangible at two main ways. First, most Albanians found their jobs through informal connections (e.g. kinship, friends and acquaintances), as mentioned by the interviewees. Second, the accessible jobs often lacked regular contracts and social insurances. Let us stop for a while with these two points.

First, social networks, mostly relatives and friends, played a significant role in job finding. All the interviews show this pattern, although the types of networks mobilised and the types of job found differed. Silvana's story is illustrative:

I moved to Tirana after having found a job. It was a job in the public sector, not very well paid, but somehow more secure than the jobs in the private sector. It was made possible through my relatives in Tirana who themselves had found good employment in the public administration and had many important acquaintances.

Unlike Silvana who found a job in Tirana similar to that she was doing in her city of origin, Arjana could not find a job as a teacher. However, through her friends' network, she managed to secure employment as a kindergarten educator.

I had been a teacher in Fier, and I knew that it would be hard to find a job as a teacher again. ... After some months, I found a job as an educator in a private kindergarten through some friends of ours who had moved to Tirana earlier than us. It's not a teaching position, but to be honest, it is paid better than a teacher; thus, I don't care.

It is worth noting what Arjana emphasised about her new job in Tirana was the pay. This shows that she placed more importance on the income than the type of position, whether it was the same as the

pre-migration job. Money holds greater value in times of economic insecurity such as those experienced in post-1991 capitalist Albanian society.

Some women were unemployed before migration or had withdrawn from the labour market to care for their children and home and/or as their previous employment structures (e.g. factories and cooperatives) had shut down. Most, such as Eleni, Drita, Eli and Manjola, had long lived mostly on the income sent by their husbands. The return of their spouses from abroad and the new financial challenges in Tirana confronted families with the need for more income and the necessity for the women to enter the labour market. (Re)entering the labour market in Tirana was difficult for these women as long-time unemployment decreases women's human capital and makes them less competitive in the labour market (Kligman 1996; Miluka 2009). To increase their employment opportunities, the internal migrant women resorted to their available resources and adapted to the demands of the labour market in Tirana. These resources included skill they had learned, such as Eleni's handcrafting and tailoring:

I had been without a regular job since 1993 when my husband left for Greece. When we moved to Tirana, I stayed at home for three months, then I found a job in a small tailoring business. I have this gift for tailoring, so I was hired.

The interviewees fit into the broad context of the Albanian labour market where jobs, for both migrants and non-migrants, are found primarily through kinships and other connections, not through institutional channels (Danaj 2014). However, we may assume that non-migrants possessed more connections than later arrivals to Tirana and thus held an advantage in finding better jobs.

Second, the interviews show that most jobs for internal migrants were found in the informal sector of the labour market. In this context, it is hard to ascertain what constituted a better job; for some, it was the security of a regular contract and paid insurance, and for others, it was good salary. For instance, Arjana and Eleni state that a good salary compensated for the lack of social insurance and formal contracts, despite the possible consequences for health and old-age pension insurance.

Arjana: Social insurance contributions are paid only by some employees at work. We [the others] are not declared [to the social insurance institutions], ... but the salary is very good.

Eleni: Now I have a good salary, but I have no insurances.

In other cases, the absence of social insurances was accompanied by low salaries. Consequently, these jobs were precarious, putting women in vulnerable, unstable financial situations. As Eleni says about her first jobs after migrating to Tirana:

Ah, in the beginning, they told us that we would have a good salary with social insurance paid and contracts and everything. Then, nothing of that sort happened. I changed several tailoring shops. The pay was very low, without contracts, without insurance, nothing. Only some people were insured, most of them were family members of the owner, while the others were not. ... Then I stayed one and a half years at home with no job at all until I found a job as a babysitter.

In 2012, Eleni, as well as Drita, worked as domestic care workers. In their interviews, they tell they found these jobs through networks of friends and acquaintances who were also internal migrants working as domestic care workers. More details about this emerging informal sector of the labour market in Tirana are provided in the next section.

4.3.2 Domestic care workers and the complex care chains in Tirana

Within the growing city of Tirana, a new sector has emerged: domestic care workers, referring to cooking, cleaning, caring and the full range of activities that domestic work and care involves. The cases of the domestic care workers illustrate the informality of the labour market highlighted in the previous section: accessing the informal labour market through informal channels. These cases also give insights into the complexity of care chains and their intersection with migration. This section first discusses some elements of domestic care workers' jobs and then the complex care chains involving these domestic care workers and other migrant women.

The emerging sector of domestic care work in Tirana employs mostly internal migrant women, as illustrated by Eleni:

I found a job as a babysitter, where I am still working. ... This is the second family where I have worked. ... Another domestic worker, an e ardhur [internal migrant] too, helped me to find this second family, so I wouldn't stay jobless after my first child grew up.

Most domestic workers have no contracts but only verbal arrangements setting the work schedule, holidays and other rules of the job. Eleni tells that she worked informally, with no contract and no social insurance but had a good relationship with her employer:

I have had a good understanding with both families where I have worked. I am like this. I want to have good relations with people. They are highly educated people, very gentle, so if they need me to stay some extra hours, I stay, and if I need to take a day or hours off, they allow me.

She also adds that she had a good salary, and her employers gave her three weeks of paid summer holidays. Moreover, at the time of the interview, Eleni tells that her current employers were using their connections to help her daughter find a job. The connections of Eleni's employer thus became a resource for her daughter. The mobilisation of informal employers as a resource to solve various issues is also highlighted by Bonizzoni (2016) in the case of migrant domestic workers in Italy. Such collaboration with informal employers is also noted in the case of international migrants employed as domestic workers in Greece (Chapter 6). So far, there are no official or unofficial data on the sector of domestic workers in Albania, leaving this area almost entirely unexplored. Consequently, the working conditions, salary and participation in the social insurance scheme for domestic workers are almost unknown (Ekonomi and Arqimandriti 2012). Nevertheless, the interviews show that many women are involved in such work and help each other with useful information, such as average salaries in the sector and families needing domestic workers or babysitters. Possibly, internal migrants adopt a form of solidarity in face of the constraints of the labour market in Tirana.

As mentioned, according to the interviews, mostly 'te ardhura' (internal migrant) women perform these jobs. These internal migrants working as domestic workers are involved in various care chains (Hochschild 2000), which brings us to the second part of this section: the complex care chains to which these internal migrant women belong. The first care chain configuration consists of internal migrant workers who take on the caregiver role for other women in Tirana engaged in the paid, productive workforce. This is illustrated by the situations of Drita and Eleni:

Drita: I work two hours per day. I work as a cleaning lady for a young couple here in Don Bosko. He is a lawyer, and she works at XX [a mobile corporation]. I clean, and sometimes I go grocery shopping for them.

Eleni: Where I work now, we are three women, one in charge of the cooking, me as a babysitter, and another woman who does the cleaning and all. We are all from different cities; one of them is from south, the other

from north, and the employers are from the town of Fier. I don't know what they do exactly, but they are quite rich, they both run their business, and as long as they give me a good salary, I am really happy.

Eleni reveals a second element of the care chains: the female employers may be migrants themselves. Thus, internal migrant women work for other internal migrant women. These care chains account for the relationship of inequality between women, as Parreñas (2001) emphasises in the case of the international migration of domestic workers. Some women, in our case migrants and natives of Tirana, can enter productive work as they can hire other women—mostly less wealthy internal migrants—to take care of their household work and members. Furthermore, the internal migrants employed as domestic workers transfer their own caregiver role to other family female members, as in the case of Drita, whose mother-in-law took care of her son when she started to work as a domestic worker.

This brings us to the third case of care chain: intra-familial solidarity. The interviews with the women discussed in this chapter show that they sought support mostly from female relatives to perform their caregiving duties and allow them to enter productive work. For instance, Zhani migrated alone to Tirana as her daughters could do the housework. Such cases also include Drita, as mentioned, and Manjola:

I was working all day at the shop in order to put things in order and make a successful business. ... My mom stayed with us during the first months in Tirana as someone had to take care of the children. There were no kindergartens in the neighbourhood at that time.

This quote again emphasises the significance of intra-familial solidarity—the support of the mother, mother-in-law and daughters in taking over reproductive care work so that Manjola, Drita and Zhani could be employed or self-employed and bring money home.

These complex cases of care chains (further expanded in Chapter 6) do not only account for migrant women's various experiences of their caregiver role. Moreover, they show that no new gender arrangements have replaced traditional gender roles: men do not take on the caregiver role, but women transfer it to other female relatives or employees.

4.3.3 Relations in extended families: shifting toward a nuclear family life

Research on internal migration (Gjermani 2004, Çaro 2011) shows that internal migration in Albania is often followed by a shift from an extended family to a nuclear family. This was an

important issue to the interviewees. Internal migration was indeed accompanied by nuclearisation of the family structure, which had far-reaching consequences for gender issues.

This nuclearisation affected different domains. First, the nuclear families within an extended family often still lived in a shared building (in the form of owned houses) but organised their physical space within the house into separate apartments. Drita and Eli, the two interviewees who lived in extended families before migrating to Tirana, describe this physical separation:

Drita: Within a year [of migrating to Tirana], the house was finished, and now we each (nuclear) family has our own part of the house. This is what I wanted [laughs].

In the excerpt from Drita, *nuclear families* refers to the nuclear families of her parents-in-law; herself, her son and her husband (even if initially he was still in Greece); and her brother-in-law's family. In their new house in Tirana, each family lived in a separate apartment on each of the three floors. Drita adds that while in the village, she often dreamt of living alone with her husband and cooking what she wanted, watching some television or sleeping a little more in the morning. She states that she could not do these things while she was living with her in-laws as there was much work to do and only a small television in the dining room primarily 'reserved for the father-in-law'.

That brings us to a second point concerning this nuclearisation process. The physical separation in Tirana was followed by a certain separation of the life among the nuclear families. Eli tells that the household economy was split, giving her more responsibility and power:

[In the big house,] I live with my children, my parents-in-law and the family of my brother-in-law. I live with my kids on the third floor, and the parents-in-law live on the first floor as they are old and cannot go up the stairs. ... We live off the money my husband sends. ... In the beginning when we came here, it was my father-in-law that was managing the money. But with the passing of time, and especially after having built the three floors of the house and separated the floors into apartments [each for a nuclear family], we are managing money separately. ... I feel relieved as I don't have to ask them [Eli's parents-in-law] for money...

This situation changed Eli's relations with her parents-in-law, and she found it easier as she did not need to ask them for money. Beyond not having to discuss money with her parents-in-law or other members of the extended family (e.g. sisters-in-law), Eli also shares that living in an apartment with only her children, she could now cook whatever they wanted.

We eat quite often together with the parents-in-law, especially during lunch, but in the evening, we stay at our apartment, and I can eat and cook what my kids and I want. I like this. I can cook other things that the others [members of the extended family] don't like.

This example further illustrates that life in Tirana was organised differently than life in villages, focusing on the nuclear family rather than the extended family.

However—and that is the third aspect of the nuclearisation process raised in the interviews—these transformations giving the women more power were negotiated and did not occur automatically. Eli describes this situation:

He (the husband) is the man; he has to know everything about what we do or if something has happened, how girls go to school and if they have had any problems. When he returns, it will be easier. I will be relieved as I won't have to carry the responsibility for everything. If something happens, I won't have to give explanations to others; I will be responsible only to him. My daughter fell very ill once, and I wanted to take her to the hospital. The hospital is nearby, and I was very afraid as I didn't know what to do to cure her. So, I told my parents-in-law that we had to bring her to the hospital, but my mother-in-law kept saying that it was nothing, my daughter would be well soon, and we didn't need to spend a lot of money on the doctors. I didn't want to argue with them, so I called my husband and discussed it with him. He also agreed with me that we had to bring her to the hospital, and he talked to his father, and we took a taxi and went to the hospital.

In this case, it may be noted that Eli did not want to openly challenge the position of her parents-in-law but used a tactic to accomplish her goal. In this family, it was the husbands who made the important decisions, and Eli mobilised this in her favour even though she was operating in an unfavourable context. This case shows how agency may be displayed in the practices of everyday life (De Certeau 1984) as Eli challenged the authority of her parents-in-law by instrumentalising the role of the husband. The following sections present similar situations when women used various tactics to negotiate gender roles.

As Gjermani (2004) and Çaro (2011) report, this shift to nuclear families represents a change for women, a 'sense of liberation', in the words of Çaro (2011, 113). The interviewees emphasised this very experience. Having separate apartments made positive changes for Drita and Eli in their everyday lives.

4.3.4 Negotiating gender roles and relations within the nuclear family

Internal migration to Tirana has frequently triggered transformations in the gender roles of spouses. The economic situation in Tirana is not the least significant factor contributing to this redefinition of spouses' gender roles. Finding a job in Tirana is difficult for men and women and, as shown, primarily requires mobilising social relations. Additionally, the economic crises since the late 2000s have hit certain sectors of the labour market hard, especially construction. This development has limited the employment opportunities of return male migrants from Greece who mostly work this sector. This situation had direct consequences for Drita and Eleni, whose husbands returned from Greece after working in the construction sector for many years. Once in Tirana, they continued to do the same work as the construction sector was doing very well. However, the growing crisis in this sector affected them. Drita tells that her husband:

came back [from Greece] five years ago, and he has been, working in construction. Now it is very difficult to find jobs in construction, and he has to move a lot in the south or in the coastal areas where construction is continuing.

Eleni tells a similar story, and at the time of the interview, her husband had been unemployed for the past three years.

Now we live off my job. ... We are living off my salary as a babysitter.

This new gendered family configuration with men unemployed or holding unstable jobs as in the case of Drita and women as breadwinners does not abruptly transform abruptly the spouses' share of productive and reproductive work. Eleni illustrates this:

He [Eleni's husband] had been working for so many years, and now he is sick. I cannot ask him to help me with the housework. He is depressed because of not having work. I can't add to this depression.

Eleni continues to perform both the breadwinner and the caregiver role. Other cases involve the same situation. For instance, Camille Schmoll (2006) reports that Tunisian circular migrant women work as traders and are being the family breadwinners through circular migration to Italy but continue to have charge of the reproductive sphere. Despite 'the inverted roles in the productive sphere, migration does not generate significant ruptures in the family order' (Schmoll 2006, 9).

However, Schmoll (2006) adds, women do gain respect and legitimisation of their productive work. In a different context, the case of Eleni presents a similar dynamic, although the respectability in this case is mostly in the eyes of her children:

Now that my husband is not working, it's me who brings the main income in the house. ... And the children often say, 'Fortunately, we have you because otherwise, we would have starved to death'. But I tell them it is because of your father that we are here, because he worked hard in Greece, and now he is sick. I don't want him to be hurt because of this situation.

However, this added respectability for the women's breadwinner role also gives rise to a crisis of masculinity due to economic constraints, as Eleni's words indicate. In a study on poverty in Hungarian households, Fodor (2006, 15) finds that 'one of the major gender differences in the experience of poverty is that men often find themselves in a gender role crisis when they are too poor to function as successful breadwinners. Women, on the other hand, tend to feel their roles as caretakers intensified and thus avoid a conflict with (newly) hegemonic ideals of femininity'. Fodor (2006, 14) adds that women help their husbands by alleviating this role crisis and the 'gender shame' derived from it. Accordingly, Eleni tells that she protected her husband in front of the children who questioned his role as breadwinner.

Another final point worth analysing is how Eleni, conscious of the transformation of the gendered configurations within her family, attempted to preserve and not destabilise them. She chose to cope with the weakening of her husband's breadwinner role by not upsetting relations within the family. Such behaviours, as Kabeer (1999, 448) writes, 'reflect a certain degree of caution on the part of women—a strategic virtue in situations where they may have as much to lose from the disruption of social relationships, as they have to gain'. At the same time, women are conscious that the gender relations within the family have changed.

4.4 Conclusion—discussing the findings

The women interviewed in this chapter are married internal migrants in Albania. At their age, they have lived through late communism and the succeeding post-communist time. They provide a vantage point for exploring the fissions in gender regimes unleashed by the collapse of communism and the new gender regimes that emerged during and following the aftermath. In this section, I highlight four main findings and compare and contrast them with the current research on gender and migration to find where they overlap and undermine each other and where my findings depart in substantial ways from current contributions on the intersection of migration and gender.

First, the interviews show that migrating in any or another form is considered to be a solution to the economic and social difficulties experienced, particularly by the rural population,

which accords with Çaro's (2011) findings specifically on Albanian internal migration. However, the migratory response to the difficult economic and social conditions is gendered: international migration is mostly men's affair, and internal migration women's. While the husband migrates abroad, the wives, children and other family members migrate internally. In this context, interviews show that Tirana is chosen as a destination for multiple reasons: it offers the best economic, social and educational opportunities for internal migration, and it is the most feasible option for a family migration project, balancing the needs of all family members and offering support from already-established social networks in Tirana (as elaborated in the second main finding).

The interviews also show that migration is a household not an individual decision, confirming the findings of extensive research (Stark 1991; Root and de Jong 1991; Lauby and Stark 1988). However, these researches neglect that the household decisions regarding migration are gendered. Interestingly, both the migration decision-making process and the preparation for the move to Tirana assign different positions to women living in extended and nuclear families. Women in nuclear families have greater negotiation power in migration decisions and often lead the preparation for the move to Tirana, but the women in extended families lack this negotiating power.

Second, the internal migrant women discussed in this chapter talk about how they rely heavily on the system of social network built during communism and how they expand and renegotiate those networks anew after communism. The interviewees give accounts of chain migration; people migrate to other cities where they have kinship or friendship networks, a feature of internal migration in Albania highlighted by other studies (Çaro 2011; Vullnetari 2014). Internal migrant women have no choice but to rely on their kin and social relations in the absence of internal migration policies to facilitate free movement in the labour market, infrastructure and various services and in the context of a weak welfare state. While family and kinship networks appear to have the central role during the entire internal migration process by married women, they create new social relations upon arrival in Tirana. One case is that of domestic care workers who create social networks with similar women to exchange information about job vacancies, average salaries and other matters. These new social networks evidence the women's agency in adapting to the new social realities in the place of destination. This adaptation is illustrated by the informal professional network of internal migrants working as domestic workers. Such 'solidarity' networks of mutual support among migrant women are also prominent among Ukrainian female migrants working as domestic workers in Italy (Vianello 2009). Schmoll (2006) also stresses how Tunisian migrant women use different types of solidarities throughout their migration process to Italy.

I now turn to my third main finding in this chapter on married internal migrant women: the transformation of the family structure and the new negotiations of gender relations. It is interesting

to note that in many cases, internal migration parallels a nucleation process, in which extended families that lived together in their place of origin live in nuclear families in separate apartments in the same building after internal migration. The decline in extended families is not a recent, post-communist phenomenon in Albania. As mentioned in Chapter 2 on the Albanian context, contrary to the common belief, the number of nuclear families was already significant before the communist period and grew more after 1944 under the communist government's modernising policies (Kaser 2014). Internal and international migration further contribute to this nucleation process, as shown by the few cases in this chapter. The nucleation of extended families seems to affect gender relations within the family, although it does not necessarily lead to reorganising gender hierarchies. The husband remains the head of the household, with the most decision-making power in the household. Nevertheless, the interviews show that the women view nucleation as a positive change in their everyday lives. The physical separation in housing is followed by a reorganisation of economic responsibilities, giving women more power and driving new negotiations of gender relations within the extended household.

Gender relations within the nuclear household are also renegotiated. As shown, the nuclear household sometimes faces a crisis of masculinity. For instance, the women discuss their husbands' depressed state after being laid off. Even while unemployed and out of the sphere of paid, productive work, men do not perform in domestic work. Furthermore, when women become the primary breadwinners in the family, they still go to great pains to maintain the façade of the man being the head of the household in front of the children. New negotiations of gender relations within the household take place amid this destabilisation of gender roles. Paradoxically and despite evidence to the contrary, the women interviewed work to neatly maintain and not disturb gender hierarchies. No significant ruptures in the existing gender arrangements within households appear. That brings us to the case of care chains in which some women pass on their caregiver role to other women.

Thus, fourth point, I discuss the issue of care work. The cases in this chapter confirm Vullnetari and King's (2015) findings on the complex post-1991 dynamics of care in Albania for both children and aging parents through intra-familial support and paid, employed care providers. Vullnetari and King (2015) explain that paid childcare providers in Tirana have increased, where domestic care workers may be Albanian internal female migrants as well as Filipina immigrants. The interviews in this chapter illustrate the entanglement of these complex care chains with migration. First, in some cases discussed in this chapter, women's internal migration is possible as their caregiving duties are transferred to their parents or shifted around, passed on from mothers to daughters. The intra-familial care chain, or family solidarity, frees women to migrate. Second, Tirana

women who enter the labour market employ internal migrants to take care of their children, aging parents and domestic tasks. Interestingly, the women who employ internal migrants as domestic care workers include both non-migrants and other internal migrants. The dynamics of care for children and aging parents and the intersections between internal and international migrant care workers are further developed in chapters 6 and 8. Third, as Hochschild (2000) investigates, the number of links in care chains may vary. Internal migrant women transfer their mothering and caregiver roles to other female family members to be employed by other women as domestic care workers. These cases illustrate the entanglement of multiple care chains with internal migration in the particular space of Tirana.

I must emphasise here that the ‘marketisation of care’ (Hochschild 2000, 133) seems to have influenced the emergence of the informal sector of domestic workers in Tirana. The invisibility and informality of this new sector, which employs mostly internal migrants, puts the women involved in a precarious job situation, lacking regular contracts and excluded from the social security scheme. This is a developing yet under-researched sector that demands future in-depth investigation.

Chapter 5: Education as a rationale for migration—young women migrating to the ‘big city’ on their own

This chapter analyses the experiences of young women from different villages and cities who migrated to Tirana for the purpose of studying. In this chapter, ‘on their own’ refers to single women who moved to and lived in Tirana by themselves while their parents and siblings stayed in their city or village of origin. Upon graduation, which was within at least three years at the time of the research in 2012, they did not return to their native communities. Eight young women who migrated to Tirana for the purpose of studying are introduced briefly. They were all interviewed with the objective of exploring this particular category of Albanian migrants.

Eriola is a 28-year-old native of Pogradec, a town in eastern Albania. She migrated to Tirana in 2002 to study political science and has completed a bachelor’s and a master’s degree. In 2012, she worked for a private television station in Tirana and lived in a rented apartment with two other young, internal migrant women in Komuna e Parisit. At the time of the research, Eriola’s parents lived in Pogradec. She is an only child.

Kiara is a 27-year-old native of the city of Fier in southern coastal Albania. She migrated to Tirana in 2003. Kiara holds a bachelor’s and master’s degree in psychology and another bachelor’s degree in economics. In 2012, she worked for an NGO providing psychological counselling and research. She rented a small studio apartment in Komuna e Parisit. She stated that while in university, she lived in the state university dormitory, and after completing her studies and finding a job, she rented a small studio apartment by herself. Kiara’s parents lived in Fier, with her younger brother who has had a sickness since childhood and cannot walk.

Olisa is a 28-year-old native of Fier. She migrated to Tirana in 2002 and obtained a bachelor’s in political sciences and a master’s in gender studies. At the time of the interview, she worked in a call centre in Tirana and lived in a small, rented studio apartment in Don Bosko. In 2012, Olisa’s parents and older brother, with his wife and young child, lived in Fier. Olisa’s brother had migrated to work to Greece and returned few years before 2012.

Iris is an only child and a 27-year-old native of Librazhd, a small town in the central-eastern part of the country. She migrated to Tirana in 2004, where she completed a bachelor’s and a master’s degree in law. As of 2012, she worked as a journalist in a private television station, where she began as a secretary. Iris lived in Don Bosko, sharing a rented apartment with a young internal migrant woman from Pogradec. At the time of the research, Iris’s father lived in Librazhd, and her mother had passed away soon after Iris graduated with her bachelor’s in law.

Erida is a 30-year-old native of Lezhe, a town in northern coastal Albania. Erida migrated to Tirana in 2000, and she completed a bachelor's in social work and master's in political sciences. After working on a temporary contract as a social worker in an institution for orphan children, she worked in a call centre and lived in a small, rented studio apartment in Don Bosko in 2012. At the time of the research, Erida's parents lived in Lezhe. She had two sisters, 13 and 11 years older than her, who were married and lived in Shkoder and Lezhe. Both had university degrees from the University of Shkodra and Tirana and had completed their studies just in the beginning of the 90s.

Alba is 28 years old and an only child from Rrëshen, a small town in northern Albania. In 2002, Alba migrated to Tirana, where she completed a bachelor's and a master's in political sciences. In 2012, she worked as a consultant for a think-tank in Tirana and lived in a small, rented studio in Don Bosko. She tells that before coming to this neighbourhood, she shared a rented apartment with two other young internal migrants, in another neighbourhood.

Erjona is 26 years old and from a village in the district of Gjirokastër in southern Albania. Erjona migrated to Tirana in 2005 and obtained a bachelor's and a master's in law studies. As of 2012, she worked as an assistant in a law firm and lived in a small studio apartment in Komuna e Parisit. At the time of the research, Erjona's parents and younger sister still lived in the village in Gjirokaster, running a small agritourism initiative. Erjona shares that her younger sister went to the University of Gjirokaster as she was very passionate about the family's agritourism enterprise and wanted to run it on a daily basis.

Marjola is 26 years old and an only child from Fier. She migrated to Tirana in 2004 and earned a bachelor's and a master's in information technology (IT). In 2012, she worked as IT specialist in a project office and lived in a small, rented studio apartment in Komuna e Parisit. At the time of the interview, Marjola's parents lived in Fier but were thinking about moving to Vlore and starting a business in the tourism sector, according to Marjola.



Figure 7: Internal migration trajectories of single, female student migrants.
Source: Map adapted by Taulant Topçiu for the purpose of this dissertation

5.1 Pre-migration phase—rationalising migration

While education provided the main reason why women migrated, as this chapter shows, it was by far not the only reason. I examine the migration decisions of these young women, taking into account their wider social relations as family and relatives.

5.1.1 Education as a platform for migration

This section explores the reasons and motivations informing these young women's move to Tirana. First, I consider the mutual relation of education and migration as objectives to be achieved. Second, I expand on other motivations that informed the migration of these young women to Tirana.

First, the belief that a university degree would provide better job opportunities emerged as significant in all the interviews. Bachelors' and masters' degrees were perceived as qualifications for finding a job. University studies were becoming increasingly attractive as a means to obtain economic security, especially for women disadvantaged in the labour market compared to men, as studies have shown (INSTAT 2012). As Erida states:

You know, they say that a university diploma for a young woman is an open door to a job. I am not sure if this is true, but without a university diploma, it is sure that it is more difficult to find a job. ... And I wanted to have a good job, but just to be clear—not in Lezbe. That is why I wanted to go to the University in Tirana.

Obtained a university diploma seemed to be essential not only to find a job but also to demonstrate self-achievement, as highlighted in Iris's narration:

I cannot imagine myself without a university diploma. What could I do without a degree? No job, nothing. I would be a failure. ... That is why I decided, together with my family, to attend the University of Tirana and later, maybe somewhere abroad.

'Education in Tirana' and 'education abroad' seem to be the code words these women used to express their desires for higher education, which brings us to the core of this section. Career success through a university degree was a sound motivation to move to Tirana, but migration itself was also a sound, robust motivation too. Some of the young women came from cities which have

universities in closer geographic proximity than those in Tirana. Nevertheless, for these young women, the desire for university studies was linked to the desire to move to Tirana, the biggest city in the country. As Kiara says, she wanted to have a university degree but also ‘*always*’ wanted to go to Tirana. Marjola describes a similar situation:

He [my father] was saying that it might be better to go to the University in Vlora²³ as it was close to Fier, and he had relatives and friends in Vlora, who could help me if I was in need. But I didn’t want to go to Vlora because it resembled Fier a little. In Tirana, it was different. ... I told my mother that it was not worth going to Vlora at all. Vlora was like Fier, with no opportunities at all, and I would have all the relatives and friends of my father in the background, worse than in Fier. And also, the purpose of these studies was to find a good job in Tirana, not just to go from one city to another.

Marjola shows that she did not only want to get educated but also to move to Tirana and leave her native city.

Marjola’s dual desires relate to the second part of this section. Beyond education and migration itself, other reasons also drove these young women’s desire to migrate to Tirana. A significant reason in the narratives of these women is escape from social control, as stated by Marjola. Social control here refers to attempts by one or more individuals to manipulate and direct the behaviour of another person or persons (Gibbs 1981). In the narratives, the women often lamented this social pressure in their native homes. For instance, they tell that people in their hometown frequently commented on their inappropriate clothing or their behaviours. As Kiara states,

They would gossip if they saw me with a boy, even a classmate, and if possible would immediately tell this to my parents’.

Similarly, Iris says:

What was there to do in Librazhd? It’s such a small city where nothing ever happens. My life in Librazhd was confined to school and home. ...it was so suffocating. Even if I had the permission to do something else, I could not, because you have nothing to choose from in Librazhd. The only entertainment was to go to

²³ Vlora is a coastal city next to Fier, in shorter distance from Tirana, which has a state university.

Pogradec in summer with your parents. Thus, the only thing I was doing was watching TV, all the telenovelas, and getting good grades in school so I could come to Tirana.

Iris's excerpt identifies a second motivation of escape: the lack of activities and the boredom associated with their native towns and villages where, the women say, nothing ever happens. Since the changes of 1991, very little attention has been given to the development of cultural and artistic infrastructure in Albania, especially for young people. Only a few cities have movie theatres, and they are non-existent in most of the country. A handful of public or private libraries exist outside Tirana. The coastal towns that cater to tourists boast few cultural activities during the summer.

Television is the main entertainment for women and girls, while men spend their leisure time drinking coffee in the numerous city bars and various sports and games parlours (Danaj et al. 2008). Since television is women's main source of information, their desires are formed by the imaginaries displayed on television. On numerous Albanian television stations, Tirana has an air of brightness and is the epitome of modernity, boasting well-dressed, fashionable young women and men, high buildings, nightlife, cinemas and festivals. Tirana contrasts sharply with the small cities and villages where these young women live and where, according to the interviewees, TV was the main cultural activity. Tirana contrasts with the 'suffocating' community and kinship pressure they felt and the lack of activities in their hometowns. It, therefore, can be assumed that, as in international migration (Mai 2004; Kim 2012), the media play an important role in offering a bright image of Tirana as a different destination from the hometowns as these women express. Discussing the international migration of Albanian youth to Italy, Mai (2004) stresses that television provides information about potential destinations, in particular about 'alternative', more 'modern' 'lifestyles' 'independent from parents' (Mai 2004, 14, 18). Focusing on female international student migration, Kim (2012) reveals how the media drive these migratory projects by generating imaginaries of alternative Western lifestyles and work.

5.1.2 Parents' role in the decision to migrate to Tirana

The parents' and the women's desires fused in the decision to move to Tirana. The interviews show on this point, the parents and the women concurred, with no substantial disagreements. Indeed, for some women, not only their wishes but also their parents' desires push them to leave as the women's parents imagine they will have more opportunities in Tirana than their cities or villages of origin. Olisa tells:

My parents, especially my father, wanted me to go away to the city, to have other opportunities in life. He is still pushing me to find a way to go abroad, for a master's or something, and to not come back. That is why I am still continuing to apply to find a master programme abroad, even though I have already obtained an MA degree, and now I have a job.

Eriola also states that the decision to study at the university in Tirana was taken in total agreement with her parents. Kiara concurs:

It was a mutual desire, my parents' and mine. ... My parents have always encouraged me, even before coming to Tirana, to take classes in foreign language or take other courses. It was my parents' drive, combined, for sure, with my own desire. I could not imagine myself without academic development.

Education is a strong value in Albania, forged since the early years of the communist regime through campaigns supporting education for all, especially girls and women, and through the construction of schools throughout the country. Even after the fall of the communist regime, the value of education persisted as a means to achieve social mobility. Parents' for their children to obtain better educational and job opportunities often triggers their children's migration, both sons and daughters (Ekonomi et al. 2004). In the same line, the interviews reveal that parents see their daughters' education in Tirana as an opportunity for further professional development, as well as for independence. As Iris highlights:

My parents had saved during many years for my university studies. That was amazing, but that also made me feel bad as they had modest income, and my mother got sick before I moved to Tirana, so the money was needed for her too. ... They told me that they just wanted me to do my studies, to find a job, and not be in need to depend economically on someone else. They told me: we don't you to be with your head down and depend on someone else, but to have your job and be proud and independent.

A second important point made in the interviews is that the parents also shielded the young women from gossip and disapproval by close kin and the wider community. It is unusual for young women to migrate on her own to Tirana (Kalaja 2014), so parents support them in various ways. For a young woman from a small city or village, migrating on her own to Tirana for education is more socially acceptable than migrating for work (Kalaja 2014). In this context, parental support becomes even more crucial. Kiara describes her parents' support amid family gossip.

My parents have never been an impediment to my education and my advancement. The relatives, yes, but not my parents. ... But I did not feel the pressure of my relatives as my parents protected me. They told me that they had many issues with the larger family regarding my education, the various classes I was taking before coming to Tirana, or my plans to advance in my career rather than planning to have a family and a kind mother-in-law. My mother told me later how my relatives gossiped and criticised my parents for the liberties I had.

The interviews show that social control did not always emanate from the nuclear family; instead, the close nuclear family served as a shield against family and community gossip. According to Drotbohm (2010), gossip should not be understood as merely ‘talk’ but as a powerful tool for exerting social control. Parents use various strategies and tactics when faced with gossip about their daughters alone. Eriola describes this:

I remember my mother told the neighbours that we have some relatives in Tirana, and I was going to stay with them. This was not true as we had no relatives, and I stayed in the dormitory. But she was concerned with what the neighbours would say, and so she just invented this story to be left in peace by their gossip.

Eriola’s mother used the tactic of inventing relatives to not let their kin and neighbours negatively affect Eriola’s migration to Tirana. At the same time, her mother took great care to destabilise neither relations nor gender expectations within the community. These situations defy the stereotypical, clear-cut distinction between modern children and traditional parents. In this regard, Moujoud’s (2011) analysis of the discourse surrounding migration and age shows that parents, mostly mothers are often portrayed as ‘guardians of tradition’ opposed to young migrant women. Although this research was not conducted in the same context, Moujoud’s (2011) analysis helps uncover this often-stereotypical opposition of tradition versus modernity. In this research, the interviewees’ parents were their daughters’ main protectors against traditional social practices. The role of parents in these cases could hardly be portrayed as ‘traditional’ or ‘backward’. Similar narratives also emerge from Turkish migration. Erel (2009) shows that parents often valued and encouraged the education of young Turkish women.

This first section highlights one major finding, among others: education is not only as a means for a better career but also a strong value mobilised by these young women to migrate to Tirana in a more socially acceptable way. Education is as well a platform mobilised by the women to escape from the community and kinship social control in their hometowns.

5.2 Transition to Tirana

This section tackles the main issues faced by the young internal migrants during their move to Tirana, particularly on some concrete aspects of this migratory phase, such as finding accommodations. The roles of the nuclear family and parents' networks are further highlighted in the narratives about this phase. Moving to Tirana is made possible by collaboration with the parents, particularly the father who is considered as the primary handler of financial issues and the source of access to networks. This role of the father becomes clear in the organisation of the move. As Erida states:

I came to Tirana with my father before the results [of the university entry exam] were published. We needed to look for a place to live. We had modest finances, so we were trying to find a place in the dormitory in the City of Students. My father had some friends in Tirana, so he was going to talk to them about the dormitory. We had heard that it was difficult to find a place in the dormitory.

Alba concurs:

Everyone was accompanied by their parents at the beginning. Now we don't want them too much around [laughs]. But in the beginning, everyone was either with their parents or their father as this is how things are. Can you imagine a family letting its son or daughter to come to Tirana alone to deal with all these issues without them having taken care of everything?!! Never! In fact, I think this is normal. This being first time to go away from home, it's understandable that they are worried. They want everything to be all right for their kids. This is normal. This is what parents do.

All the interviewees say that their parents, mostly their fathers, accompanied when they came to Tirana to enrol in their respective universities. For them, a function of the family is to take care of the children, even in their adulthood. They do not question this premise but take their parents' presence with them as support during the process of settling in Tirana, either in the dormitory in the City of Students or in shared rentals. They also say that parents do this with both young women and men migrating to Tirana. The children's young age is seen as a reason for the parents to take this supportive role. Additionally, the parents may possess ties in social networks to facilitate a smoother move to Tirana. The parents are also in charge of the financial resources needed for the move.

Despite an ever-growing number of students, Tirana suffers from a lack of dormitories or dedicated residences for students. The private universities²⁴ rarely offer residences, and the main dormitory is within the City of Students associated with the State University of Tirana. Consequently, accommodations are quite an important component for the process of moving to Tirana. Many students at the State University aim to find a place at the dormitory as it is the cheapest and most affordable option. Those who attend private universities mostly live in shared, rented houses in particular neighbourhoods around Tirana, such as Komuna e Parisit and Don Bosko. Sharing a rented apartment is also discussed and negotiated with parents, so they can be sure that their daughters are living in a safe place with ‘good persons’ coming from ‘good families’, as Erjona states. The conditions in the public dormitory are subpar, lacking electricity and heating. Nevertheless, due to the very modest financial standing of students’ families, the dormitory is the best option for many students. Kiara illustrates this:

During my university studies, money was in short supply because of some family issues, so the alternative was to go to the dormitory as it was less expensive. I was lucky to have some excellent roommates who became good friends. But that period was very difficult. The life in the dormitory was very difficult: miserable conditions, a tiny room, no space for personal hygiene, no privacy at all. The conditions were not conducive to studying there.

Eriola describes a similar situation:

The worst thing in the dormitory was the lack of electricity and water. It was hard to read and study with the power turned on and off. We could not even have a proper shower without water and electricity. But as long as I was not working, my parents could not provide more money, so I had to endure the few years until I finished school.

Parents are considerably more worried if their daughters live in rental apartments than the dormitory, as Erjona recalls. She states that her mother was very anxious until they met with her roommate, who was also from her hometown. Olisa describes a similar situation:

²⁴ It must be noted that most private universities in Tirana (and later in the rest of the country) opened in the mid-2000s. Currently, the number of students in private schools is much higher than in the years when these girls arrived in Tirana. The practice of shared apartments rented by students, especially in Komuna e Parisit, has become widespread in recent years.

My parents often came to Tirana: to bring food, to check if I was eating well, if the apartment was tidy, if my two roommates were excellent and we were not having problems with each other, and this kind of stuff. My mother visited more often. They were worried as we were three girls living alone, and they were worried. But, in the neighbourhood, the majority of people around were students sharing apartments, so it was not only us.

The anxiety surrounding the girls who live in shared apartments can be explained by the status of the dormitory as a public facility, with hundreds of other young women and men, rules to follow and guards at the doors. It, therefore, might be imagined that the dormitory has a higher degree of institutional control and security than privately rented apartments. In reality, the interviews report that there were no such rules or safety guarantees. Iris states:

With a little money, you could provide access to anyone wishing to enter the dormitory. I mean a man could come in our female-only dormitory, so it's not like we had that much security. If I had the financial means, I would not have stayed there; I'd have rented an apartment.

In this group, there seems to be no clear correlation between the social and wealth standing of parents and the choice of university (whether public or private) and accommodations. During the time when these women studied, the number of private universities was still low.

5.3 Life in Tirana

This section elaborates the paradox characterising these women's situation in Tirana: there, they experience less social control by family and community, but at the same time, they face highly gendered and sexualised prejudices and constraints that arise from the same mechanisms as those they escaped and that put them in new forms of precarity and dependency.

5.3.1 Anonymity as freedom

Anonymity is a way to get away from social control. *'The fewer people know you, the freer you are'* as the control that others can exercise to impose specific gender norms and roles is considerably diminished. Tirana is a large, growing city with new communities being created and people coming from all the parts of the country. In this setting, people barely know each other, and this provides the anonymity that young migrant women appreciate. Anonymous, they feel less pressured and controlled, as illustrated by Erida's narration:

When I came to Tirana, I remember that I started to dress differently. It was not in the beginning, but after some months, I began to look at other girls here and at the cloths shops. It was suddenly possible to wear a miniskirt or stretch jeans, which I could not wear in Lezhë. I added blond highlights to my hair as it was the fashion at that time to dye hair like that. ... At first, I could not go to Lezhë dressed like I did in Tirana, and when I went back home, I got back into my old clothes [laughs]. Now it is different as it looks like things are changing a little in Lezhë too, and people don't give you weird looks because of your clothes.

In the same vein, Erjona adds:

I hate to cook. Yes, now I know a little how to cook, small things, but in general, I hate it. When I was in Gjirokaster, my mother tried all the time to teach me how to cook, how to prepare desserts, how to prepare dough to make byrek, and all these traditional meals, which I like to eat but not to prepare. But it was like an obligation to know these things, and I was fed up. I wanted to read instead, and I remember that I was always angry when I had to learn how to cook. ... Here, I don't cook. I can buy byrek if I want to, but in general, it's toasts and salads.

Another novel practice is going out to bars and nightclubs, which is was radically different from life in the interviewees' city or village of origin. For example, Marjola says that in Tirana, she goes out to have coffee by herself. She did not do that commonly in her city of origin as people would look at her and judge her, but in Tirana, where she knows few people, she does not care if they will look at her or not. These young migrant women appreciate this dimension of life in Tirana and prefer the liberating anonymity and indifference (Simmel [1903] 2002) of the big city compared to their places of origin, where people know each other. Migrants to the big city find that the physical distance separates them from the 'prying eyes of the community' (Kihato 2009, 86). Alba adds:

Fortunately, in Tirana, you don't know a lot of people, and like this, you are less controlled, and you can live normally, without this damn fear about she saw me doing this, he saw me doing that.

Similarly, Kiara says that in Tirana, one can get lost, and this makes up the freedom Tirana offers compared to her hometown.

The streets in Albania, as Musaraj (2009) aptly notes, carry ambivalent connotations. The interviewees often present walking the streets of Tirana without knowing people as the much-appreciated anonymity and freedom whereas the streets of their hometowns represent the place

where social control is exerted at full force. For instance, the coffee shop in their hometowns is a 'forbidden' space for these young women, especially those coming from towns and villages. Appropriating such a 'forbidden' space in Tirana appears to give the young women a greater sense of freedom than in their places of origin.

5.3.2 The other side of the paradox: new gendered and sexualised prejudices and constraints

A paradox manifests quickly after these young women's arrival in Tirana. As these cases show, they face gendered and sexualised prejudices as living on their own, far from their families, is perceived as transgressing the borders of accepted femininity. Moving from the provinces and living alone in Tirana makes them vulnerable to prejudice and discrimination from non-migrants and other migrants alike. From the perspective of those living in Tirana, almost all other cities of the country are the provinces. Thus, when young migrant women arrive in Tirana, their behaviour is often perceived as that of people 'liberated from chains'. This view complements the many prejudices against young female students moving on their own to Tirana, or 'dormitory girls' as they are often called. Iris illustrates this point:

As dormitory residents, we were all seen as whores. Especially older men and other people think so. You must know this expression 'dormitory girls'. It means that these girls have all the worst qualities of the world, they are all whores, and they just want to get money from married men. We were and still are considered to spoil marriages and families. First of all, this was not true, but even if it was, what about these good men who were betraying their wives with younger women and also paying them? But, as we all know, men are always good people, and we are the whores.

Kiara says that it is not only non-migrants who prejudice against them but also other internal migrants, primarily those who migrated with their families. The stigmatising labels such as 'dormitory girls', 'girls from the cities' and 'the whores from the cities' all have the same meaning: they describe young girls with no morals, who lead an unacceptable life by any established moral norms. They are widely believed to engage in sexual relations for money and to have 'destroyed married couples' through their relationships with married men. They can get away with unacceptable behaviour as they live far from their families who would usually exert control over them.

There seems to be no such stereotyping of young male students. In Kiara's words:

That was the most problematic thing, that we were considered to do evil things while away from our families. I think of these as stupid stereotypes and as stereotypes only about girls as boys could do whatever they want, and no one would judge them. To the contrary, they would be congratulated.

The lives of the male students moving to Tirana appear to be extensions of their lives in their cities of origin and are not thought to be marked by the radical change that the young women encountered. The male students were allowed to pursue activities in public by themselves in their hometowns and continue to do so when in Tirana. They were allowed to have relationships with girls and were not judged for them, and this continues in Tirana. In contrast, young women encounter a very different environment from their previous lives. In Tirana, they are freer, as they say, to do things they could not do in their cities of origin. They may have a nightlife, establish relationships with younger men or older men and go to the bars, for instance.

5.3.2.1 Mobilising one's erotic capital

Often, young people who migrate to Tirana for educational purposes do not return to their hometown. The interviews analysed in this chapter show that young migrant women invest as much as possible in their education and training (e.g. pursuing master studies and graduating from two faculties to increase their employment chances) to find well-paid jobs in Tirana and, as they say, perhaps to leave the country. To achieve these objectives, they try to mobilise all possible resources, primarily their social networks. This gives rise to a further element of the paradoxical situation in which these young women find themselves. They appreciate the anonymity Tirana offers as they know few people, but they also need to develop and maintain social networks to find a good job. As mentioned in Chapter 4, most Albanians find jobs through informal connections, not institutionalised channels. The nepotism in access to the labour market affects both men and women. They must have connections to find and keep jobs. Accordingly, most of the women interviewed report finding employment through their friends' network. Others find employment in their field of study with the assistance of their professors. For instance, Kiara says that after she held several temporary jobs, a professor in the psychology department helped her secure work with an NGO providing psychological research and counselling. Erjona recounts a similar situation. She says that during her studies, she had the opportunity to work as an intern at her professor's law firm as she was one of the best students, and she still works there.

A specific strategy is mobilising the erotic capital (Hakim 2010) to establish new social relations and achieve one's plans and objectives. As Marjola says:

I was in a relationship with an older man, much older, in fact. It's not the end of the world. I know that people in my close family would die if they knew, but to be honest, I am so far away from home, and in few months, I'm going even farther away and will probably never return. Why care so much about what people say? In fact, this happened during my time as a student. I was lost and I did not want to return to home. Having a relationship with this man and all the niceties that he was providing for me was a kind of work [laughs]. ... It's impossible to find a job in Tirana the normal way. Everybody knows this. You need to have important connections and have some security. ... He helped me to find a reasonable job, in an office. I've worked two years there, but I'll be leaving soon as I've got a scholarship for a master's in Germany. I did it; I succeeded.

According to Hakim (2010, 512) erotic capital (i.e. beauty, sexual attractiveness, flirtations, social presentation and sexuality) may be an essential concept for understanding sexual relationships and social processes in the public and private spheres of the individualised and sexualised cultures of modern, 21st-century societies. Hakim (2010) notes that like social capital - the resources, material or otherwise, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 119) - erotic capital can be an important, hidden factor improving success in employment. The mobilisation of sexuality has been analysed mostly in the context of international migration. For example, investigating the case of Chinese migrants in Paris, Levy and Lieber (2009) show that Chinese migrant women turn sexuality into a resource that allows them to achieve their objectives.

5.3.2.2 Financial uncertainties and precarious jobs

Additionally, the interviews show that these young migrant women tend to be employed in the jobs that are unrelated to their studies and are more precarious (i.e. lack collective contracts and employment protection and are characterised by a generalised, permanent state of insecurity) (Bourdieu 1998; Fredman 2004). For instance, Erida, who has a master's in political sciences, works as a unit supervisor in a call centre:

I still work for the call centre. It's not well paid, and the work is quite difficult. It's not a regular workplace where you go, and you can have some friendly relations with your co-workers. The fear of being fired is always there or the fear that someone will badmouth about you to the supervising manager. You are fired first, and it

is only later that they can find out if you were guilty or not. But this is the best employment I could find, as opposed to becoming a salesperson.

Finding a job and an income that will allow them to continue living in Tirana after graduation becomes the most important objective of these young women. Consequently, they accept uncertain jobs without social insurance as long as they bring in money. Accepting low paid jobs and living in a constant fear and uncertainty embodies what Bourdieu (1998) calls *precarité*, a generalised and permanent state of insecurity aimed at forcing workers into submission and acceptance of exploitation. The young women discuss the lack of regular contracts, and most do not pay social insurance and lack employment protection.

Furthermore, being a woman and a migrant on her own leads to additional difficulties in the workplace, particularly forming professional relationships with superiors and male colleagues. Eriola summarises many of the challenges these women encounter while accessing the labour market:

Now I work for a private TV station. It's very tiring and frustrating as we don't get regular salaries. It's paid well; there are no contracts, no contributions. But it's so difficult to find a job in Tirana, so you have to get used to this market. And the main problem is not the salary or the contract: it's the attitudes of men who are in higher positions or those of other male colleagues who treat you like a piece of garbage. And they are less educated than myself. It goes like this: 'yes, you girls from the districts, you have no morals. That is why you are working here'. 'Don't put on weight because you'll get fired'. ... OMG, I always wish to say to them: 'shut up, people, just worry about your job and your life'. But I don't say anything. I just play this role of the stupid girl, and that's all. I'm not staying there forever; it's just a temporary job. I can cover my rent and other expenses, and this is just enough.

Stigmatisation as migrants—the girls from the districts, with no morals, ready to do everything to keep their jobs, advance in their careers or get money—recurs throughout these young women's lives in Tirana. Sexual objectification, or equating a woman's worth with her bodily appearance and sexual function (Szymanski, Moffitt and Carr 2011, 6), is another characteristic of their situation. They have to stay thin and good-looking to not lose their jobs.

These pressures contribute to their paradoxical situation in Tirana, where new freedoms and new gender constraints are intersected. It appears that the young women migrants have remained in the same gender order (i.e. unequal hierarchical positions and gender norms, roles and expectations for men and women) but in a different constellation of gender constraints. This may be seen in the

issue of sexual harassment reported in the interviews by some women, as detailed in the next section.

5.3.2.3 Sexual harassment

Some participants mention sexual harassment, which seems to happen mostly in the workplace. Kiara states:

Sexual harassment happened daily. You had to be very strong to endure this. ... I was harassed for about a month and a half, and after that, he [Kiara's boss] gave up as apparently, he saw that it was not going anywhere. ... He was profiting from our situation as he knew that we were students, and we needed these jobs, so he considered himself to have the right to do this.

Kiara shows that she is aware of sexual harassment and the factors that put her in a vulnerable situation, in particular, her financial dependency and status as a female migrant on her own. Sexual harassment happens not only in small informal businesses but also in those considered to be more prestigious. Olisa says that she had to quit her job as a secretary for a newspaper due to the harassment by her supervisor.

One day, the director of the newspaper where I was working started with this kind of words such as, 'You are so pretty. Your hair is like this. Your eyes are like that', etc. In the beginning, I was only smiling and, to be sincere, appreciating all these beautiful words. But this carried on with comments about my body, and he kept me in the office when everyone else left. It was then that I realised what was happening.

Olisa adds that the day after she once refused to travel with her boss, he warned her that if she could not travel with him, then she was not right for the job. She says that she then quit that job.

Facing sexual harassment, these young women feel unprotected and do not know where to report it. Iris describes this situation:

Once I had to quit my job as the owner of the shop was trying to persuade me to sleep with him. I didn't know what to do. I told him several times that I was not that kind of girl. But at a certain moment, he made it clear that I had to sleep with him if I wanted the job. I, therefore, left the job as I had no other choice. I could not complain to anyone about what was happening, so I just left the job.

Sexual harassment in the workplace that affects single, student migrants while single women and single mothers appear to be more vulnerable to it, ‘undercuts woman’s potential for social equality in two interpenetrated ways: by using her employment position to coerce her sexually, while using her sexual position to coerce her economically’ (MacKinnon 1979, 7). MacKinnon’s (1979) definition of sexual harassment (i.e. the unwanted imposition of sexual requirements in a relationship of unequal power) emphasises the exploitation of women’s need to find or keep a job. Often, migrant women face sexual harassment due to their needy position. According to Kocaqi (2013), single women and single mothers are the most vulnerable group to victims of sexual harassment in the workplace. When they come from another city or village, this vulnerability increases. Life in Tirana is very difficult and very expensive, and these young women give their best to secure employment, often putting them into very unpleasant situations of sexual harassments.

According to the interviews and to Kocaqi (2013), young migrant women in Tirana living on their own are subjected to sexual harassment more frequently than those living with their families. These interviews also show examples demonstrating that sexual harassment does not preclude the agency of these young women, as Erel (2007) also shows in her research on migrant women in Germany. Instead, these young women try to make use of their available resources, primarily their social networks, and to carry on about achieving their goals.

5.3.3 Marriage and family formation—discourses and practices

This section focuses on the views on marriage held these young women who were single at the time of the research. It is worthwhile not only to analyse these views but also to scrutinise the practices they deploy to postpone family formation while pursuing self-achievement and better career options. Information on the marriage rate in Albania and the changes at the age at marriage is briefly presented to provide the background against which these women’s perceptions of marriage may be read.

Interlude: marriage patterns in Albania

The marriage rate (marriages per 1,000 inhabitants) is still very stable, at 8.9 in 1990 and 8.7 in 2015 (Danaj et al. 2005; INSTAT 2016), and marriage remains the primary and almost universal form of family formation (Danaj et al. 2005; Lerch 2009; Çela et al. 2012). Nevertheless, there has been a notable change in life strategies as young women marry later and have fewer children (Kalaja 2013). Overall, declining fertility is another pattern of population development in Albania, especially among young people. The proportion of young childless women

in the 20–24 years and 25–29 years age groups has increased significantly: 75.13 per cent of young women age 20–24 years were childless in 2011 compared to 64.1 per cent in 2001 and only 36.9 in 1989.

Another pattern in family formation is the increase in the age at marriage. However, the increase has been less for women than men. The age at marriage for women has risen from 23 years in 1990 to 24 years in 2015, and for men, from 27.3 in 1990 to 29.6 in 2015 (Danaj et al. 2005; INSTAT 2016). A slight change can be noticed in the overall marriage patterns that, for the moment, might support the idea that there is a trend to postpone marriage. This can be seen in the decreasing marriage rate for the age group of 19 years old and younger and a quite constant increase in the 25–29 and 30–34 age groups.

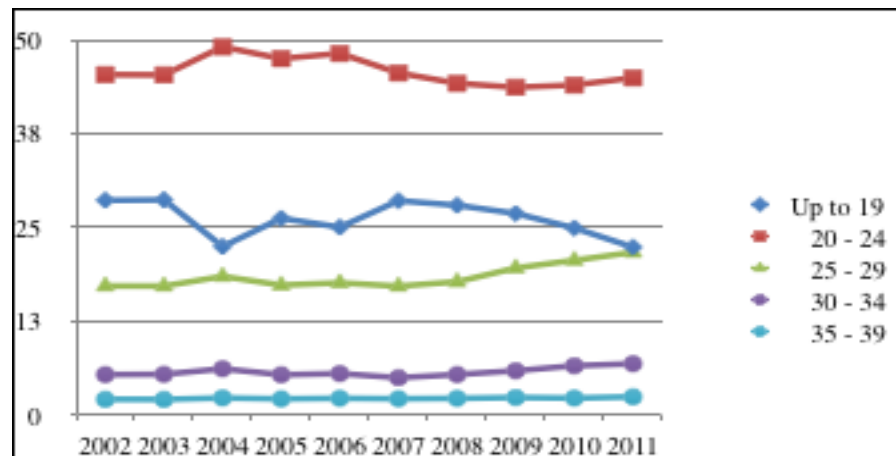


Figure 7. Married women by age group (percentage). Source: Author's calculations using 2011 census data

The average age at marriage for women in Albania in 2015 was 24 years old (INSTAT 2016). The single young women interviewed in this study are all older. The age at marriage differs by region (urban/rural) and education level, with those with the higher education levels getting married later than others. The women discussed in this chapter belong to this last group.

As mentioned in Chapter 3 on methodology, the interviewees sometimes employ social desirability (Callegaro 2008) discourses. These say more about the participants' projections of what they want to be or what they think the researcher wants to hear. Regarding family formation, I do not know what the participants' practices will be or how their situations will evolve. At this point, I can only analyse what they discuss, bearing in mind that their discourse might be biased by social desirability.

The young women interviewed share the perception that marriage would hinder their career advancement, and they maintain that marriage and career advancement are mutually exclusive. Marriage, for them, would result in a loss of the 'freedom' they have now, which means living alone far from the control of their families and relatives. Eriola thinks that marriage would entail a loss of

control over herself. She adds that she does not want to become a servant, obeying her husband's orders. This imaginary of marriage and family formation represents a hierarchical gender regime with women in a subordinated position. Kiara explains:

Finding a husband, getting married, having children and living in harmony with the mother-in-law, this has never been part of my plans and my priorities.

Although some young women, when talking about their families, describe their parents as having more or less equal gender roles, they express a profound regret for their mothers. They describe their mothers as having endured a lot of pressure from the community or relatives and giving up their desires at certain points in their lives. In their discourse, the young women react against their parents' gender relations, which they do not wish to form themselves. The everyday family relationships they have witnessed inform their ideas of marriage. Marjola and Alba exemplify these views:

Marjola: I don't want to become like my mother. Not that I have anything against my father as he has always worked hard for us, but my mom, too, she worked and at the same time dealt with housework. And she has had to endure a tense relationship with my father's relatives who have never loved my mother. But she never stopped supporting them in order not to spoil the relationship with my dad. I don't like to tolerate this all the time and remain silent about it.

Alba: I remember my aunts always visiting my house to check if my mother had bought a new dress or something new for the house. They would then gossip all the time behind her back. My parents knew of this, but I don't remember them discussing this, at least I've not been aware of it. ... My mother told me once that she had been among the best students in engineering, but she didn't continue with her studies as she got engaged, and she had to prepare for marriage and everything. I am sure that my father's family put its nose in this, pressuring her to abandon her studies. And probably my dad urged her too, and maybe that is why he insists so much that I don't return to Rrëshen.

A possible way to escape marriage is to stay in Tirana and live alone, they say. Another way is 'leaving to marry a foreigner', as Iris states:

For sure, I will live with him and not with all his relatives, and I know that a foreigner is respectful and will respect my own freedom.

In this imaginary, marrying a foreign man means having a more equal relationship free of interference by other family members. Eriola says that she knows that abroad relationships are formed differently:

I have friends abroad, and you can understand that men there are different, more respectful. They help with housework. They take care of children.

She states that she would prefer not to marry in Albania and, instead, find someone abroad who would allow her to have her work and lead her own life. On one hand, there is the image of unequal gender relations experienced within the woman's own family, and on the other hand, there is an idealised imaginary of the foreign partner, which research has shown that may be illusionary (Riaño and Baghdadi 2007). This idealised imaginary of abroad reproduces the dichotomist discourse of tradition and modernity that assigns modernity to the destination, which was first Tirana and now abroad.

It is important to raise the question of what informs these narratives of foreign partners as better and more respectful than Albanians. Unfortunately, I have no more material from these narratives to give an adequate answer. I might hypothesise that this belief may be related to the general perception that life elsewhere, outside Albania's border, is better than anything found within the country. These imaginary narratives may spring from Albanian youth's access to foreign television channels, as mentioned.

5.3.3.1 Postponing marriage

Although the overall national-level data do not show significant changes in the marriage rate, a slight, tentative change in the significant patterns of family formation in Albania can be seen in the rising age at marriage. The interviews confirm this trend. We might formulate the hypothesis that educated internal migrant women help drive this process:

Kiara: Girls know that if they return to their hometown, one thing is sure: they will get married to someone their parents picked out. They will have two to three babies, as much as their husbands want as they don't have any control anymore. They would have a job, or not, and that is life. They would be subordinated. And knowing their fate in the small cities, girls choose to postpone this process. If they don't find ways to stay in Tirana, they at least try to delay the return as much as possible.

The imagery of marriage as a loss of control over one's lifestyle is one reason these young women might not return to their hometowns. It is interesting to scrutinise their practices in the process I call marriage postponement, which itself appears to be a strategy to preserve their current autonomy.

Alba: Each time I go to Rrëshen, there is this question of marrying, and my aunts propose to me lists of young men ready to be married. ... I remember one time quite recently that they even had prepared an occasional meeting with one guy that they had picked out. My father was not informed about this, and I told him. We had an extended discussion on marriage, him and me, and it looked like he agreed with me that finally now that I have found a good job, and I am trying to find a scholarship abroad, it is not really the time to marry in Rrëshen. To be honest, since that discussion, I've gotten no more propositions. I imagine he must have talked with his sisters.

Alba's tactic to turn the situation to her advantage is to talk to her father, whom she considers to be her ally in her project of investing in education and career. Pressured by her kin to marry, she solves the situation by going to her father. Kiara says that she openly discussed the issue of marriage with her father after her aunts inquired about her marriage plans. Karia clarified that she had no plans for marriage, and her father told her that he wanted her only to succeed at her job and in her life and that she could decide about her life herself. Young people in Albania consider the father to be the head of the household (Çela et al. 2012), and from this position, the father may make arbitrary decisions, resulting in unequal gender relations within the family from which these young women are trying to escape. However, they can also instrumentalise the father's role 'as the head of the household' to achieve their objectives; if the father agrees, no one will oppose it. The young women try to win their fathers to their cause.

Another practice to postpone marriage and avoid discussion of it is not to take it seriously for as long as possible. This is the case of Olisa:

Olisa: Getting married is still an issue as I am 28 years old, and thus in the prime time for marriage. I may even be late. My parents try to bring up the issue out often, and I understand as they need to be reassured that after attending school, I will have a good husband, and I will settle down. It is very disturbing as every time I have to find justifications. I make jokes, such as 'Look this famous actor. She had her child at 50 years old', etc., to avoid concrete discussions about this.

During the communist period, marriage at early ages was legally prohibited, but marriage after reaching the age of 25 years old was also not common. Expressions such as ‘the woman who has surpassed her age of marriage’ were applied to unmarried women in their thirties. The age at marriage also depends on education level, with those studying at university marrying later. This type of discussion of age at marriage can also be seen in the case of Eriola. Eriola jokes with her mother about marriage as her mother also did not marry very young:

I joke with my mom as she is just driving me crazy all the time about marriage and children. ... But I don't get angry about this as we're not going to solve anything. Every time she brings this up, I start joking that she was older than her friends when she got married, so let's wait until I turn 30 and then talk again about this [laughs].

The participants may deploy more explicit approaches, as does Marjola:

I have told them [my parents] that I was not going to stay in Tirana but that I would find a way to go study abroad. Maybe I could find someone abroad, too. The idea of me going abroad is very important to them, so now we're concentrating on this and are no longer talking about engagement and marriage.

Kiara also makes focusing on her careers and preserving her independence her goals:

I don't want to depend on my husband. I want to have my job, to be good at it.

Similarly, Kalaja (2014) explains that young women are aware that as soon as they go back to their hometowns, the pressure from their families and mothers to get married and settle will be very strong. They are well aware of common advice: ‘Your marriage age is being surpassed now. You need to settle’ (Kalaja 2014). As Kalaja (2014) argues, marriage would reduce or erase these young women’s investment in education as they would very soon be in charge of caring for children and detached from the aspirations for a good job appropriate to their education.

Postponing marriage may be seen as an example of these women’s transgression of accepted femininity, manifested here in marriage as the hegemonic form of family formation. These young women view marriage as an obstacle to career advancement and as a loss of their newly gained freedom. Marriage and family formation, for them, are the epitome of the hierarchical gender regime subordinating women which they escaped by migrating to Tirana.

5.3.4 Tirana as a 'jumping board' to the future

Many women who migrate for education do not return to their native cities or villages. The scope of this research does not allow assessing how their situation will evolve in the future, what will happen to them if they return to their place of origin or whether they will migrate abroad or continue to live in Tirana. This section focuses on their plans and the rationales behind their choice not to return to their native cities or villages. Iris reports her feelings about returning to her hometown by recounting her best friend's story:

My best friend at the university went back to Librazhd. The pressure of the family was too high. They could not support her financially because of economic difficulties. She was not finding a job. She had nothing to live off. ... Maybe she was right to go back; I don't know. But she told me once that she has now a boyfriend there, and she is back to the secretive practices, meaning that the family doesn't know about this friend; she meets him in secret. My God, this is frightening to go back again to hiding things and to fear to get out of the house and lying in order to do so. I am not sure I could do this again.

Some women return for varied reasons. Iris says her best friend encountered financial difficulties and the impossibility of finding a job. But Iris also emphasises the distance she feels from life in her native city. Like Iris, all the other interviewees consider that return to their city of origin to be out of the question.

Erjona: What is the solution? Return to the village? Erase everything I've sacrificed? ... The choice is between either bearing this disgusting environment here or to go back to what I despise. I escaped that many years ago.

Kiara: Going back to my city has never been a serious alternative for me.

Interestingly, Erjona describes Tirana as a 'disgusting environment'. Tirana is not 'a field covered in flowers', if I may use an Albanian expression referring to an easy, beautiful life. As Vullnetari (2012) explains, the big city offering anonymity and opportunities allows young women to go through various experiences and difficulties and at the same time to explore their capabilities and potentials. In their interviews, they constantly compare their life in Tirana to their life in their cities or villages of origin. Their narratives highlight difficulties and constraints faced in Tirana related to the financial situation, job insecurity and gender and sexualised prejudices, stigmatisation and harassment.

Reflecting about their life in Tirana, though, they contrast the possibilities in Tirana with the impossibilities of their hometowns. It seems that this constant comparison with their previous situation helps them face the contradictions they encounter. According with Erjona', Iris says:

I am happy to be here. The things I've experienced here, I could have never had them in my city of origin. It's not easy as you are all by yourself, and we're human. We need to be with people that we love and that love us back. But this is life. You have to make some sacrifices on one hand to gain something else on the other hand. ... So, I say it is better I am here for the moment. There is no going back for sure, but there is also no permanent stay here in Tirana.

Regarding their plans, their wish to go abroad frequently recurs. As Kiara declares:

Living in Tirana is a transitory phase. I have always considered this time to be a temporary phase before going abroad. I've always wanted to go overseas.

Tirana is 'a transitory phase'. The city does not seem to be the young women's final destination. They see it as a jumping board, another step on the journey to go abroad. Olisa also tells that she constantly looked for new educational opportunities abroad to leave Tirana and settle somewhere else. In this case, we see that student migration is part of a broader life migration strategy, as emphasised by Findlay et al. (2012). Additionally, at the time of the research, Marjola had already applied and been accepted to a master's programme in Germany. As she makes clear throughout her interview, migrating abroad was always her primary objective.

Although these interviews conducted in 2012 do not provide information on how the participants' situations evolved or whether they succeeded in their goals to go abroad, a conclusion regarding their future plans may be drawn. Based on their plans for the future, migration might be considered as a strategy by itself (Dahinden 2009). Tirana is only a step in a grand migration journey. At the time of the research, all of the interviewees had already applied to attend a master's or doctoral programme abroad. Two had been accepted and, by the time of the writing of this chapter, likely had already left Albania.

5.4 Conclusions—discussing the findings

This chapter analyses the experiences of single migrant women who moved to Tirana on their own for educational purposes. In what follows, I give some general concluding reflections and then follow with three key findings.

I begin with a general reflection on the meaning of moving on their own for the women discussed in this chapter. As a term, *women moving on their own* covers varying realities, as well explained by Schmoll (2006) in the case of Tunisian female migrants. In this chapter, *on their own* refers to single women who moved to and lived in Tirana to attend university while their parents and siblings stayed in their city or village of origin. However, it needs to be said that *on their own* has other possible meanings, as suggested by Schmoll (2006). First, women migrating on their own are not completely alone as they are taken in by various relational networks that support them during migration, as explained later. Second, it is not very socially acceptable young women to move on their own. Consequently, the interviewed young women mobilise various tactics and strategies to face the stigma against migration on their own. All this is further discussed in relation to the three key findings from the interviews.

First, the interviews show female student migrants embrace education not only as a strategy for a better career but also as a rationale for migrating to Tirana. Migrating for education also allows them to escape from the gender constraints and the lack of opportunities in their hometowns. Since the communist era, education has been a significant value for Albanian families across parents of different educational levels (Danaj et al. 2005). This value appears to be highly gendered, and young women exploit it as a tool and resource for migration: migrating as students is more acceptable for single women. According to the interviews, as also stressed by Vullnetari (2009) and Kalaja (2014), emigration by young women on their own is less gossiped about and more readily accepted by the kin and the community in the hometown when it is for educational purposes. As Kalaja (2014) indicates, however, this acceptance would not be extended if the daughter were leaving on her own for work purposes, for instance. Parents consider their daughters' education to be an investment in a better career and social mobility, as well as a more acceptable way to migrate given the social control exerted by the community. The young women thus strategically mobilise the value placed upon education as necessary and accepted among Albanian families as a resource to achieve their migration projects. The interviews show that internal migration to Tirana may also serve as an early phase in step-wise migration. Young women sometimes first migrate internally to obtain education and skills and later migrate to other international destinations to gain more and better opportunities, as also reported by King and Skeldon (2010). To accomplish migration projects, the women rely

heavily on parental support, not only to cover their financial expenses but to protect them from the reactions and gossip of the community. Even when an individual migrates alone, the family left behind still play a significant role, especially in those cultures where the family exercises influence over daughters and sons even in adulthood (Lauby and Stark 1988).

Education is not the only motivation for moving to Tirana; these women's interviews show that their internal migration is a double escape that entangles in push and pull forces. Women escape from the social control and the gender norms in their hometowns, which constitute a push factor. Migration as an escape from the dominant gender constraints and customs in the place of origin is stressed by other researchers, such as Kihato (2009) in the case of women's migration to Johannesburg and Erel (2009) in the experiences of Turkish migrant women. Similarly, Kofman et al. (2000) emphasise that women's migration often provides an escape from the patriarchal structures in their hometown. At the same time, the interviews reveal that women desire to escape from the lack of opportunities in their cities and villages of origin to Tirana, which appears to them to be the land of opportunities. This imaginary pulls them toward Tirana and reinforces their drive to migrate from their hometowns.

The second key finding expands upon the paradox of these women's situations in Tirana: The capital city offers liberating anonymity and autonomy compared to their places of origin. However, this freeing lack of social control in Tirana is accompanied by new gender constraints and difficulties that arise from the same mechanisms as those they escaped. The situation leaves the young women in new forms of precarity and dependency.

On one hand, the young women greatly appreciate their escape from the social control of their hometowns and the new freedom gained by moving to a city where they know very few, if any, people. According to the interviews, anonymity frees one from social control. The fewer people know you, the participants maintain, the freer you are as the control of others over you, especially through gender norms and roles, diminishes. The women narrate release from close surveillance by family and friends and the lack of a need to report to anyone as a wonderful achievement. In Tirana, they experience anonymity and indifference, similarly to what Simmel ([1903] 2002) analyses in his influential work on the city and mental life.

On the other hand, from the interviews, it appears that the liberating dimension of Tirana comes with a price. The women's paradoxical situation quickly becomes apparent upon their arrival in Tirana. As their cases show, they face gendered and sexualised prejudices as living on their own, far from their families, is perceived to transgress the borders of accepted femininity. Furthermore, sexual objectification and sexual harassment are prevalent in the workplace, and the young migrant women living on their own are more vulnerable than women living with their families. The young

migrant women on their own can be coerced into having unwanted sexual relations due to their economic vulnerability. Their experiences confirm the sexual harassment framework proposed by MacKinon (1979), according to which workplace sexual harassment arises from and reinforces a labour market characterised by sex segregation and the sexual objectification of women.

In this paradox, that liberating anonymity and lack of social networks may also be limiting as to adapt to the new life in Tirana and find sustainable jobs, the women need to rely heavily on well-developed social networks, especially when accessing the labour market. The interviewees mobilise various types of capital, including erotic or sexual capital, to enter the workforce. In the notion of erotic or sexual capital, sexuality is transformed into a resource to achieve one's objectives, as discussed in Levy and Lieber's (2009) work on Chinese migrants in Paris. The mobilisation of erotic capital illustrates how these women enter new gender configurations that might be different than those dominant in their hometowns but have the same underlying mechanisms of unequal gender relations.

In the third and final key finding, the interviewees articulate gendered geographical imaginaries that shape their migration projects. They demonstrate Appadurai's (1996) suggestion that the imaginary is a powerful force driving human action. Imaginaries about Tirana as a place bursting with opportunities and freedom and lacking the social control of gender norms entice these women to migrate there. The imaginary positions Tirana as a site where women may achieve certain freedoms unavailable in their hometowns. Nevertheless, the educated women migrants discussed in this chapter consider living in Tirana to be a transitional phase and express their desire to continue their migration project abroad. Their interviews reveal a chain of geographical imaginaries in which internal migration is insufficient by itself and is entangled with international migration projects. As the participants express, the image of abroad is deeply related to opposition to marriage and the contrasting ideal of the foreign husband, constructed based on media representations and other emigrants' stories.

Importantly, these cases illustrate the role of gender in shaping geographical imaginaries and consequently migratory projects. For example, Riano (2015) analyses how the imaginaries of equality of Europe inform Latin American women's migration projects, influencing their decisions on how and where to migrate. Similarly, the interviewees in this chapter ground their imaginaries on the persistent opposition of tradition and modernity. Tradition refers to the hometown, and modernity first to the imagined life in Tirana and then to that life abroad. Regarding life in Tirana, the interviews show that the presumed opposition of tradition and modernity cannot be supported, as evidenced by the women's paradoxical situation in Tirana. This paradoxical situation appears to push them toward further gendered geographical imaginaries with a gendered idealisation of abroad.

Chapter 6: Returning not at home: the ‘status paradox’ of international female migrants returning to Albania

In this chapter, I focus on the group of women who migrated internationally. To distinguish them from the women who migrated abroad for education (Chapter 7) but to avoid limiting this group to only women who migrated for work purposes, I refer to them as *international migrant women*. Common to this whole group is that after their international migration experience, they returned to Tirana instead of their hometowns. The majority of the women in this group are married, while two are single, and two are divorced. The women who form the core of this chapter are as follows.

Marta is a 34-year-old woman from the city of Fier. In 1998, Marta had already finished the high school two years ago but was not employed in any paid job. That year, she migrated to Switzerland with a fake passport to join her husband, who had earlier migrated through illegalised ways, and together they requested asylum. During her stay in Switzerland, Marta was exclusively in charge of the care of the house, her husband and her daughter. In 2006, Marta returned to Tirana with her child after not succeeding in obtaining asylum in Switzerland. She divorced from her husband a few years later. Her ex-husband still lived abroad, no longer in Switzerland but elsewhere in Europe as an illegalised migrant. In 2012, Marta was self-employed and lived with her daughter in a rented apartment in Don Bosko.

Migena is a 40-year-old woman from the city of Pogradec. She lost her job in the early 1990s and migrated to Greece with her fiancée in 1994. She migrated on a regular, short-term visa but could not obtain a long-term residence permit and stayed there in an illegalised way. In Greece, Migena worked mostly as a babysitter and domestic worker, while her husband was in construction. After not succeeding in regularising her long-term residence in Greece, she returned to Tirana in 2002. In 2012, at the time of the interview, she lived with her husband and child in an owned apartment in Don Bosko and worked for a private bank in Tirana. Migena has a master's in economics.

Elona is 39 years old, comes from Lezhe and first migrated to Greece in 1994. Upon graduation from high school in 1991 Elona started work in the Flour Mills factory in Lezhe. She left Albania on an illegally purchased visa to follow her boyfriend to Greece. During her stay in Greece, Elona first worked as domestic and care worker in a village, while her partner worked as an agriculture worker. Later, she became an employee in a bakery shop. In 2004, Elona and her husband returned to Tirana, where they ran a bakery shop together. She lived with her husband and children in an owned apartment in Komuna e Parisit.

Juli is 38 years old and from a village near the town of Tepelenë. In 1993, she had already graduated from high school and was jobless. That year, she migrated to Greece with her husband, his brothers and their wives, crossing the border through hidden pathways in the mountains. In Greece, Juli worked as a domestic and care worker, a cleaning lady for various businesses and later as hairdresser. While in Greece, she divorced from her husband, who remained there. She returned from Greece after 13 years and lived with her child in Tirana, in an owned apartment in Komuna e Parisit, where she ran a hairdressing shop. Juli has a high school diploma, and in 2012, her civil status was divorced. Juli and her child also obtained Greek citizenship.

Denisa is 45 years old and from the city of Gjirokastrë. There, Denisa worked in the local government but lost her job in the mid-1990s. In 1996, she migrated to Greece on her own, while her family (husband and child) stayed in Gjirokastrë. Denisa migrated in a legalised way based on her Greek ethnicity. She engaged in a pendular movement between Greece and Albania, working as a domestic worker in a tourist village six or seven months a year and returning to Gjirokastrë for the rest of year. In 2007, Denisa, her husband, child and parents-in-law moved to Tirana. In 2009, she emigrated again, this time to the United Kingdom with her child, while her husband and his parents stayed in Tirana. She returned to Tirana in 2012, while her child stayed in UK. She and her child have obtained Greek citizenship. She has a university degree, and in 2012, she worked in Tirana as a domestic worker and lived with her husband and parents-in-law in an owned apartment in Komuna e Parisit.

Arlinda is 46 years old and from Kukës. She earned a professional high school diploma and worked as a nurse in the regional hospital in Kukes. With her family, husband and two children, she migrated first to Tirana in 1999, where she could not find a stable job, and then to Greece in 2002. A Greek employer vouched for them, making their migration possible. In Greece, she worked as domestic worker and cleaning lady. In 2007, she returned to Tirana with her husband, while her children remained in Greece to study. In 2012, she had retired from the labour market and lived with her husband in an owned apartment in Don Bosko, while her children lived abroad.

Mimoza is 44 years old and from Saranda, the southernmost city in Albania. She left for Greece in 1993 with her husband, who belonged to the Greek minority population in Albania. In 1993, Mimoza had graduated from the university and worked as an accountant in a factory in her native town, Saranda. She and her husband migrated with regular visas. In Greece, she worked as a cleaning lady at several places, as well as a domestic worker. Mimoza, her husband and her child returned to Tirana in 2004. She ran a dry-cleaning business with her husband in 2012. Mimoza, her husband and her two children obtained the Greek citizenship through her husband's Greek ethnicity. She lived with her husband and children in an owned apartment in Komuna e Parisit.

Irida is 36 years old and from a village nearby the city of Shkodër. In the early 1990s, she migrated with her parents and brothers to the city of Shkoder. In 2000, Irida migrated to Italy on a regular work visa after graduating from the University of Shkoder and not finding a job. In Italy, she first worked as domestic worker, then as hairdresser and took professional training in body care and hairdressing. She returned to Albania in 2007. In 2012, she was single and lived alone in Tirana in a small, owned apartment in Komuna e Parisit, where she ran a beauty centre. Irida had a long-term Italian residency permit.

Rovena is 42 years old and from Fier. She migrated to Greece in 1993, after graduating from the professional nursing high school in Vlora and working as a nurse in Fier. Rovena migrated alone with an illegally purchased short term visa, while her parents stayed in Fier. In Greece, she worked first as a domestic care worker and later as a nurse. She returned to Tirana 14 years later. In 2012, Rovena worked as a nurse in a hospital in Tirana, was single and lived alone in an owned apartment in Don Bosko. At the time of this research, Rovena had a Greek long-term residency permit.

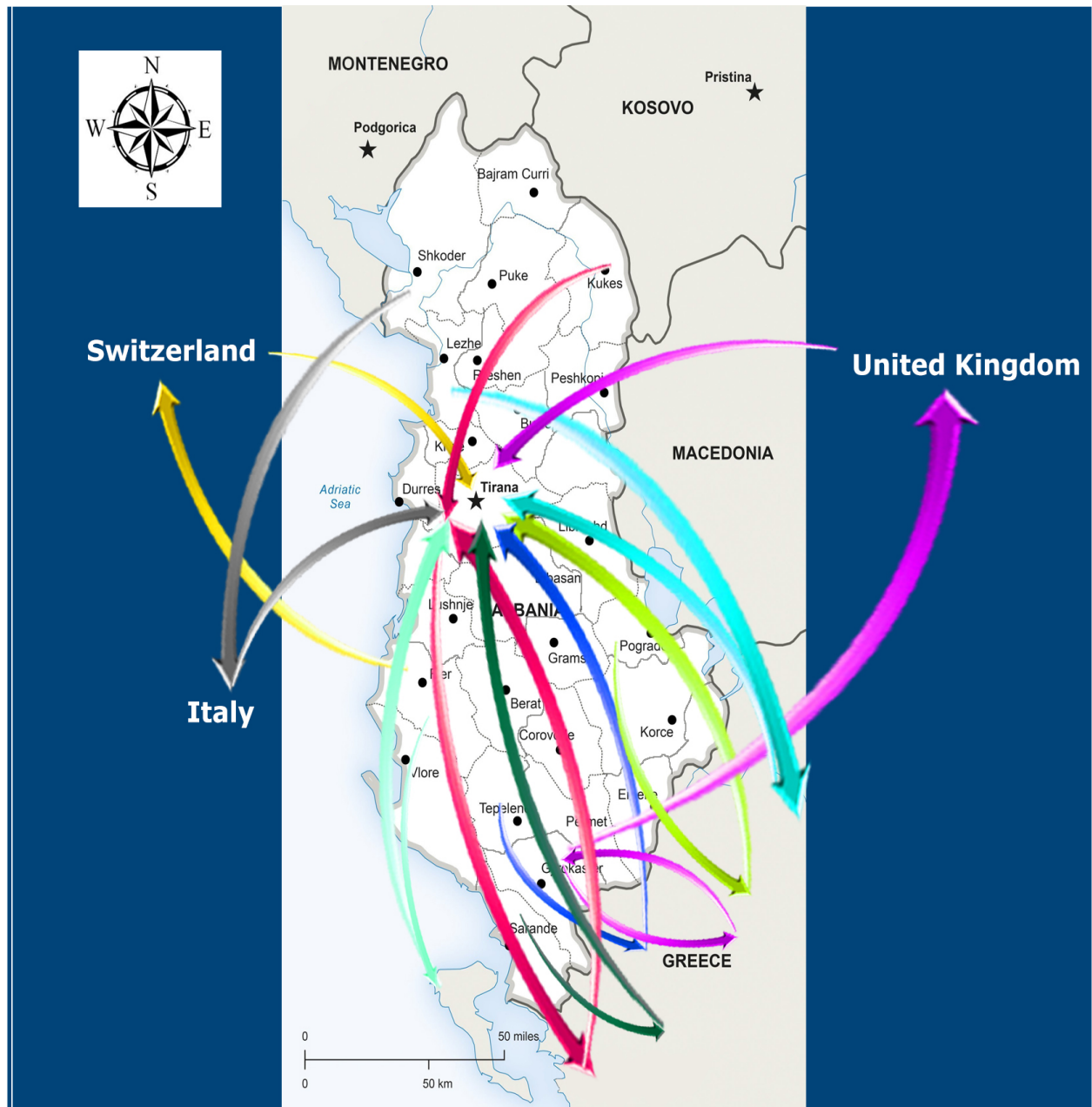


Figure 8: Migration trajectories of 'international migrant women'.
 Source: Map adapted by Taulant Topçiu for the purpose of this dissertation

6.1 Leaving Albania

Using the narratives of these female migrants, this section sheds light on their multiple and sometimes overlapping motives for migration, the negotiations informing the decision to migrate and the actors and structures involved.

6.1.1 Multiple motivations to migrate abroad

The interviews discussed here show that these women's migration projects are triggered by diverse, entangled factors and cannot be framed solely within push or pull factors. Let us explore these cases more in depth. First, tough economic situations and loss of employment appear to be significant motivations for migrating abroad. Let us first examine the case of Irida:

The economic situation of my family was awful. We had moved from the villages to the city of Shkoder, but we were even in a worse situation as my parents were unemployed, and we lived on only the salary of my brother.

In Irida's story, the first internal move did not translate into better financial situation, prompting an international move. Similarly, Rovenia recounts why she left on her own for Greece earlier in the 1990s. She lived in Fier with her parents, who faced a difficult economic situation, while her married sisters lived with their husbands and children:

My parents were old, and my sisters were married and trying to survive with their families. I was the only one who was able to do something for the parents and myself. ... I had a job as a nurse as I had graduated from the professional nursery high school in Vlora, but the salary did not suffice for all of us. The pension of my parents was ridiculous.

Irida and Rovenia stand as young, single women who migrated internationally with the aim of helping their families facing financial hardship. These cases do not usually figure in the common imaginary of Albanian migration, but they do exist. Economic migration is not exclusive to Albanian men; single women, too, migrated to financially support their parents. In the very difficult economic and social post-1991 conditions, the decision to migrate seems inevitable for many women, as well as men. The loss of employment after the fall of the communist regime is Migena's main motivation to Greece to work as a babysitter:

I was unemployed. ... I had worked at an elementary school, but some of the positions were eliminated. I was young and newly hired, so I was also among the firsts to be dismissed. ... In Pogradec, there were no opportunities in sight.

The loss of employment also provides the primary motivation for Denisa, who has Greek ancestry and whose parents had already moved to Greece in the early 1990s. She tells that after she lost her job, and her husband's position was downgraded, the family's economic conditions deteriorated. Denisa migrated on her own to work in Greece, while her husband, daughter and parents-in-law stayed in their native city of Gjirokastrë. Arlinda tells a similar story, with different specifics. Arlinda, her husband and her children migrated first internally to Tirana. However, her family's financial situation became problematic as she could not find a job. That supplied a significant motivation for her and her husband's decision to move to Greece. International migration becomes a further step when internal migration does not accomplish the expected outcomes. Moreover, as Arlinda expresses in her interview,

Migrating to Greece could be a good educational opportunity for our children.

Education, too, appears to be a drive of migration, as highlighted in the two previous chapters.

Second, some women did not migrate for strictly economic reasons. Here, again, we see a multitude of situations. Firstly, in Mimoza's case, she left for Greece in 1993 as her husband was a *minoritar*, and the couple could easily obtain visas. They were not in a bad economic shape at the time. Mimoza recounts:

I was working at a factory as accountant. It was a good job, a very good job indeed for the time. However, in the beginning of the 1990s, things changed, and what was previously considered a good job, it wasn't anymore. ... Many of the people we knew, friends, relatives, they had already migrated or were planning to leave for Greece. I think it was more this environment that pushed us to leave, rather than proper financial reasons.

According to Mimoza, more than '*proper financial reasons*', the environment pushed Mimoza and her husband to leave. As many Albanians then migrated to Greece, the post-1991 international migration became a mass phenomenon and reinforced the sense of relative deprivation, as explored in Chapter 4. (In relative deprivation, individuals and households migrate not only and necessarily to maximise their absolute income but also to improve their position in comparison to other reference

groups [Stark and Taylor 1991].) Moreover, Mimoza's case reveals the influence of what is called the 'culture of migration' that emerges within sending areas—a situation in which 'migration becomes deeply ingrained into the repertoire of people's behaviours, and values associated with migration become part of the community's values' (Massey et al. 1993, 452–453). As migration grows within a community, it changes the values and cultural views in ways that increase the probability of future migration (Massey et al. 1993). Consequently, in the case of Albania, migration has driven further migration from the sending areas (Vullnetari (2012).

Elona and Juli also stand among those who did not migrate because of strictly economic reasons. Elona's case illustrates the use of migration as a strategy to escape the constraining gender expectations in the hometown. Migration as an escape from gender constraints is thoroughly discussed in Chapter 6 in the context of young women migrating internally for education and appears again in this chapter in the case of Elona, who tells that she left for Greece to free to be with her partner.

I didn't want my family to know about my boyfriend as a lot of troubles would come of it. I didn't know if they would agree, so we preferred to keep it secret. If they knew they could separate us or oblige me to marry with someone else or not ... I didn't know what could happen if they knew. ... When he told me that he was thinking to leave for Greece, I immediately thought that I should go with him, and so we could solve our situations with our families. If we left together, they would have nothing to oppose anymore but would have to accept our relationship.

Migration thus becomes salvation from not only economic hardship but also gender constraints, particularly the fear of arranged marriage. Davies (2009) and Baban (2003) highlight the persistence of arranged marriage in contemporary Albania, and Davies (2009) reports that young women leave the country through the practice of elopement due to fear of arranged marriages by their families and the social control of their families.

As well, Juli raises the geographical imaginaries related to migration, as highlighted in the previous chapter. About the motivations that pushed her to migrate, she tells:

The idea that I had about 'abroad' was very attractive. ... The young female dancers on TV, the clothes that other emigrants were sending back to the village ... I am not sure I was thinking about ... making money, it was more about some beautiful clothes and hair models [laughs] and this kind of things that I had in mind before leaving for Greece.

Juli's story illustrates how the migratory project is shaped by imaginaries, fuelled both by earlier migration (e.g. the clothes sent to Greece by earlier migrants) and by television. The glittering imaginary of abroad seen on television, influences the migration processes of young Albanians, as explained in the previous chapter and by Mai (2004) in research on the role of television in Albanian migration. Television depicts an imaginary of 'alternative lifestyles' (Mai 2004, 18), 'beautiful clothes and hair models' that, for Juli, contrast with her hometown.

Finally, I present the case of Marta, which centres on family unification: she migrated to join her husband who had previously migrated abroad. Women's migration for family reunification purposes has been observed in the late 1990s Albanian migration (King and Vullnetari 2012). Marta says that she had no specific reason or desire to migrate, but her husband pulled her to join him:

My husband was telling me on the phone that we needed to be together as couples do and also that he needed me there as migrant couples in Switzerland had better treatment.

Moreover, she adds that her father told her that by migrating, she could help her parents who faced financial hardship. Marta found herself between her parents pushing her to migrate so that she could support them and her husband pulling her to migrate so that he could improve his living conditions.

To conclude, the cases analysed in this section lay into the framework of those studies that approach migration as process that cannot be explained by a single push or pull motivation (Castles and Miller 1998; Morokvasic 1984; Vianello 2009; Kihato 2009; Riaño and Baghdadi 2007). I, therefore, do not talk in terms of push and pull factors. These cases demonstrate, instead, that the migration process is triggered by various entangled reasons and factors related to both the sending and the receiving countries.

6.1.2 Negotiations behind decisions to migrate

To better understand the reasons for migrating, it is worth analysing how the decision to migrate is made and what negotiations follow. According to Vullnetari (2012), family and kinship relations are important drivers in the decision-making process to migrate, and much of this process takes place at the household levels rather than the individual level. The interviews in this chapter illustrate such pattern, albeit with numerous nuances.

First, I start with the two cases of Rovenia and Elona, who at the time of migration were one single and the other involved in a secret relationship, respectively. They both bypass their parents

and siblings in their decision-making to emigrate. Rovená says that when she decided to immigrate to Greece, she made no mention of her plans to her parents.

I told them nothing about my plans. ... I told them few days before that I was leaving. I was 23 at that time. My poor mother, she was terrified by this idea. She was expecting me to marry and settle down, and now I was telling her that I was going away alone. I told them only once I had prepared everything as otherwise, it could have been harder. ... Me, that young, a young woman migrating alone, how terrifying that could have been for my parents if they knew before. Them not knowing about my plans was easier for me and for them.

Rovená's excerpt shows how her migration on her own to Greece transgresses the prevailing gender expectations regarding marriage and settling down. To not be stopped in her plans to migrate, Rovená sidesteps her parents and prepares her migration project with the support of her cousins already settled in Greece. Similarly, Elona tells her parents and siblings nothing and prepares her migration with her boyfriend. The two young women bypass their parents, but their decision making is not individual given the significant involvement of other relatives and a boyfriend. Although their primary reasons for migration are different—Rovená migrates to escape economic hardship and Elona restrictive social practices—both sidestep their parents as a tactic to transgress the same constraining gender expectations, marriage in the case of Rovená and arranged marriage in the case of Elona. Migration thus is not an elevator to empowerment and agency as migrating is itself a manifestation of agency and empowerment, of challenging existing conditions, both economic and social, as highlighted by Moujoud (2008).

Second, the other cases that follow are based on clear household decisions. I start with Irida, who was single at the time of migration. Her parents and brother were highly involved in her decision to migrate, and as Irida says, it was a decision made in a consensual way due to their shared financial adversity. The support of the relatives in Italy made this decision easier because as Irida says, she knew that she would find help in Italy. Again, the role of kinship networks is highlighted as crucial for preparation for migration.

Married and engaged women engage in different negotiations with their husbands, parents and parents-in-law. Denisa says that her hesitation to migrate to Greece arose as she and her husband 'were not willing to leave them [the husband's parents] alone'. Caring for one's parents, generally the husband's parents, is a strong tradition in Albanian society (Vullnetari and King 2015). However, Denisa says that after she lost her job, and her husband received a lower salary, she took the initiative to move to Greece, where her parents of Greek ancestry had already themselves:

And I told him [Denisa's husband], 'Do you want to continue like this, or do you wish to give it a try in Greece? I can go by myself if you don't want to come, and let's see what happen'. A few months later, my parents found me a job in Greece, and I started my ik e eja [come and go] movement to Greece. ... My parents-in-law helped with taking care of our little daughter as my husband came very late from work so he could not look after her.

As mentioned, to be free to migrate, women often need to transfer their caregiver role to relatives, pointing to the complexity of care chains. For Denisa, her husband and she were unwilling to migrate as they wished to care for his parents. However, when migration became a solution to economic hardship, Denisa transferred her caregiver role to her parents-in-law. The parents-in-law took on Denisa's caregiver role to free her to migrate to increase their financial capital and better care for her close family, including her parents-in-law. Denisa's demonstrates mutual intra-familial solidarity. As highlighted by King and Vullnetari (2006), elderly parents not only receive care but can play an important role as caregivers for their grand-children. The case of Denisa also challenges the dominant transnational gender representation of Albanian migration: the emigrant man who acts as the breadwinner and the woman who stays in Albania to care for the family and house, as observed in Chapter 4.

Juli's case also illustrates a household decision-making process. Nevertheless, she, her husband and the members of her extended family have different reasons for migration. At the time of migration, Juli lived with her husband, his parents and his two brothers and sisters-in-law. As she recounts:

I don't recall it in details, it's such a long time now. I don't exactly remember who was the first to take the initiative and talk about the idea of migrating to Greece. ... It was necessary to find a solution as the economic conditions were getting very hard. Most of the young people from the village had already migrated to Greece, and it seemed the solution for my husband and his brothers too to go to work in Greece. ... My husband was worried to migrate together with us [Juli and her two sisters-in-law], but I insisted. I was more than determined to leave with him. I knew that I didn't want to live in the village anymore. ... I convinced my husband. ... I said that we were all young, and we could work and send more money to the parents-in-law. ... Better six people to work than three.

As mentioned, Juli tells that her main reason to migrate was not money but the imagined Greek lifestyle. Despite the different motivations for migration, Juli managed to negotiate with her husband by instrumentalising the main household objective: overcome economic hardship. She used the

tactic of exploiting the household motivation to achieve her own migration objective. We see that in these cases, migration was - as shown in numerous studies (Stark 1991; Root and de Jong 1991; Lauby and Stark 1988)- a household, not an individual, decision. These women played quite significant roles in the decision-making process.

That is not the case of the two next cases of Migena and Marta, who had little to no participation in the decision-making process or in the choice of destination as the father and/or the husband planned, and the women followed. Marta migrated to join her husband who had already moved to Switzerland. As noted, Marta was driven by both her husband and her parents, who wanted her to migrate and join her husband although she had no wish to leave Albania. However, as she says,

Once he decided that I should go, I had no other way but to follow.

Migena's was also taken by surprise as her father had prepared everything for her to migrate. She tells:

Yes, he [Migena's father] had found me a job in Cavalla. ... He told me that he had already talked to the parents of my fiancée, and they were fine with the idea of me migrating first and my fiancée joining me later. ... According to my father, this was an opportunity not to be lost. ... On one hand, I was happy to have a job and to live in a better city than Pogradec, but on the other hand, I was a little scared from all that was happening so fast.

Migena's interview describes how she was excluded from the decision-making process and preparation for her move to Greece. Her father covered this entire phase, from dealing with organisation details (e.g., a job and visa) to negotiating with her fiancée's parents. Despite Migena's marginalised role in the decision making and preparation, she viewed emigrating, working and living in 'a better city than Pogradec' as an opportunity.

These two cases emphasise the dominant roles of male family members (respectively, the husband and the father) in the migration decision-making process. They illustrate that the family is the institution where the interplay of gendered power relations is strongest, as highlighted by Vullnetari (2012) in research on Albanian migration. These interviews show that women hold different positions in this interplay: a) some have the same voice as their husbands or parents in the decision to migrate; b) others bypass their parents who might pose an obstacle; c) some instrumentalise the household migratory objective to achieve their own objectives; and d) others are

relegated to a marginalised role in the interplay of the gendered power relations behind the decision-making process. Unlike the cases in Chapter 4, where women's role in the decision-making process is related to the household structure (nuclear or extended), the interviewees discussed in this chapter do not show this clear relation. For example, Juli who lived in extended families, achieve significant position in the migration decision-making process.

It is worthy to mention here that all these women's stories about the decision to migrate have a single, common thread: social networks of kinship, friends and acquaintances. These networks assume a role of an utmost importance as these women need to cross the borders, which is much more difficult than the cases of internal migration analysed in the two previous chapters. In the next subsection, I expand upon the role of these various social networks and the many ways of crossing national borders.

6.1.3 Crossing country borders

Before going into the details of the role of social networks and the different migratory regimes, light needs to be shed on the factors that cause these women to migrate abroad and not to Tirana, like the women in chapters 4 and 5. Expanding on this migratory choice gives insights into the role of social networks and migratory regimes. The interviews reveal two major reasons materialise for decisions to migrate internationally instead of internally. First, Greece and Italy appear to offer better financial opportunities and living conditions. These are quite significant reasons for those women migrating for financial reasons, as their statements indicate:

Denisa: In Greece, I could work and earn money that was impossible in Albania.

Rovena: I had no [economic] opportunities in Albania, for sure.

Irida: I just wanted to go to another country and work there to help my family and myself.

International migration to Greece and Italy was and is considered to be a solution for improving very difficult economic situations and can be considered to be a diversifying and risk-minimising strategy for households (Stark 1991).

However, not everyone has the same opportunities to migrate internationally, which brings us to the second main reason: the feasibility of the migration project. Almost all women in this group state that they chose an international destination where they had family or friendship or

acquaintance networks already established there. Similar to internal migration (Chapter 4), international migration appears to be achievable due largely to pre-existing networks. Various types of social networks—friends and acquaintances, family and parents—are mobilised to enable the move to Greece, Italy and Switzerland by taking care of logistical details for crossing the border, accommodations and employment, for instance. In Albanian migration, social networks stand as key factors determining the decision to migrate and the choice of destination (Vullnetari 2007).

In the following, I go into more detail about the role of these social networks in leaving Albania and entering other countries. This allows elaborating on the legalised and illegalised ways used by these women to cross national borders. Boyd and Grieco (2003) and Wihtol de Wenden (2015) state that the decision to undertake a migratory project is not the same as being allowed to exit or to enter a particular country. Nation-states enact policies and affected the gendered international migration process through constraining the crossing of borders. This also arises in the context of Albanian migration. As mentioned in Chapter 2, since 1993, Albanian citizens have not been legally impeded from freely leaving the country, but to enter to another country, they have to comply with its possibly strict migration policies and visa regime. Confronting the impossibility of entering some countries with regular documents, many Albanian migrants have entered through illegalised ways, especially to two neighbouring countries, Italy and Greece.²⁵ Migrating through illegalised ways (e.g. mountainous paths to Greece and speedboats to Italy) has further shaped perceptions of Albanian migration as a male affair, with men taking on these risks.

The women in this chapter had mixed experiences of crossing borders and entering other countries. Social networks play roles in all the interviewees' narratives, so let us first consider the cases of those women who migrated through legalised ways. Irida immigrated to Italy on a regular work visa after her close kin succeeded in finding her a job with a regular contract and an employer available to sign documents for her. Denisa and Mimoza migrated to Greece on legal documents due to the *minoritar* status of their mother and husband, respectively. *Minoritars* have advantages over Albanian citizens of Albanian ethnicity in getting entry visas to Greece and obtaining residency permits and even Greek citizenship (these are quite impossible for those of Albanian ethnicity) (Vullnetari 2007, 2012). Again, kin networks lend significant support. Denisa took on the project of working in Greece after her parents' migration as she could find a job through their acquaintances. Mimoza says that her husband's relatives waited for them at the Albanian-Greek border checkpoint

²⁵ As explained by Vullnetari (2012), Italy and Greece should not only be considered from a geographical perspective - Macedonia is another neighbouring country for example. Besides being neighbour countries, Italy and Greece, they are primarily European Union countries with a higher economic development compared to the other Albania neighbouring countries.

and took them to Athens, where they provided accommodations for several months. Also, Arlinda and Migena migrated to Greece on regular visas made possible by their kinship and acquaintances networks. For Migena, her father's acquaintances enabled her to get a short-term visa and find a job as babysitter in Cavalla:

My father had made some networks with Greek businessmen who were coming to Korçë and Pogradec, and he found me this opportunity in the city of Cavalla in Greece. They also helped him with my visa.

Similarly, Arlinda tells that her husband's relatives who migrated earlier to Greece facilitated their move to Greece, helping them secure the documents necessary for a visa and getting jobs for Arlinda and her husband. Parents, relatives and acquaintances networks are mobilised in the cases of the interviewed women migrating through legalised ways.

Other women have migrated through various illegalised ways, according to their interviews. Let us examine them more in detail, starting with the case of Juli. She tells about her migration to Greece:

We left together, my husband and me and his brothers with their wives. ... We left illegally through some border villages near Gjirokaster. ... What I remember is that we could not carry much with us as we were told to we had to walk and climb a lot. ... We took with us some byrek and a little milk and water; that is what I remember. A villager from the near villages who was often doing this thing for money took us near the Greek border. I have no idea where it was exactly. If you told me now to go and find the place, I could not. I think I was very much shocked by what was happening. The only thing I remember is that we had to walk and hide in some woods for a couple of days until we met the guy who would pick us up on the Greek side.

Juli states that people from their village who had already migrated to Greece helped them contact local smugglers who knew the illegalised mountain paths. These smugglers from nearby villages in Gjirokastër also collaborated with residents of the Greek border villages. Juli adds that during her family's first months in Greece, their co-villagers who had established themselves in Greece hosted them.

Fake documents and illegally purchased visas numbered among the other ways of leaving the country. Elona, Rovená and Marta left with illegally obtained visas or fake passports. As Elona says in her interview, she migrated two years after her boyfriend left via the mountainous border. With the money he sent, she arranged for a Greek visa through a visa dealer in Tirana. Elona had to

handle all the paper and preparation in Albania by herself as her family did not know about her plans:

The hardest part was to go to Tirana for the visa because I had to go in secret from my family.

Likewise, Rovená says that she had to deal with the passport and visa issues. She had no passport then, so she had to apply for a new one, which was not easy due to bureaucracy. To pay the bribes for the passport and to buy a Greek visa through a dealer in Tirana, she borrowed money from her cousins in Greece. Marta tells that she migrated with a fake passport arranged by friends of her husband. She flew to Switzerland through Italy and was *'frightened to hell'* as she had never left her hometown, and now she was traveling with a fake passport, and *'anything could happen'* if she were caught by the border police. In addition the support of partners, husbands and relatives, the networks mobilised to migrate through illegalised ways included co-villagers who had previously migrated and networks of visa dealers and migrant smugglers.

Juli, Elona, Rovená and Marta show that young women also migrate through unsafe, illegalised channels. Although these women might be fewer than men, the image of the Albanian man who migrates through risky, clandestine ways is not entirely accurate. Women, too, have undertaken risky migration projects. In the context of Eastern European migration, Andrijasevic (2004, 256) explains that the persistent absence of women from visual depictions of border-crossing emerges in a discursive scenario that figures migrant women not as protagonists but as characters endowed with little or no agency. In sum, Albanian women who cross borders through risky, illegalised ways remain under-researched and under-documented but nevertheless certainly exist (Vullnetari 2012).

6.2 Life abroad

This section analysis some particular elements of the economic experiences of the interviewed women while abroad. Their experiences abroad are far richer than what I can present in this section. Due to space limitations and the need to focus on their post-return experiences, I here concentrate particularly on their economic activity that builds a striking, common story of these women's bargaining power and capacity to adapt to new social realities. The section also highlights some migration trajectories mostly invisible in the broader picture of Albanian women's migration, such as pendular migration.

6.2.1 Filling the care gap in Greece and Italy

Greece and Italy seemed to be the easiest countries for finding a job for Albanian migrants, at least until the mid-2000s when the first signs of the global economic crisis emerged. While the main reason is these two countries' proximity to Albania, equally important, their structure of the labour market and welfare systems allowed Albanian migrants, men and women, to find jobs. Southern Europe countries were attractive to migrants due to the development of the informal sector (Vaious 2002, Vianello 2009, Lyberaki 2008), employing men mostly in the construction industry and women in the domestic sector. Accordingly, most women discussed in this chapter work in the domestic sector, and this subsection focuses on domestic care workers.

Three main points regarding economic activities in the destination countries emerge from the interviews. First, Albanian female migrants appear to fill the care gap in Italy and Greece, often allowing Italian and Greek women to engage in productive work. For instance, Elona's first job in a Greek village consisted of performing housework and babysitting. She tells that her employers were a Greek couple who owned the property where she and her boyfriend worked. After Elona's arrival, the wife, who previously dealt primarily with the household, started to work with the husband, in the production and sales of olive oil and jam. The arrival of Elona enables her Greek female employer to shift from housework and care duties to business-related tasks. Rovenia also tells that she cared for an older age couple, allowing their daughter to return to her productive employment as a full-time lawyer in a law firm. After the mother's illness, Rovenia's Greek employer shifted to part-time work while caring for her parents, but Rovenia's work allowed her to resume her full-time job. In perspective similar situation, Migela tells:

I was working as a babysitter for a young couple in Cavalla. I was also teaching some English to the two little children I was caring for. ... They were quite a wealthy couple; they were both dentists and had their own dental cabinet. The wife had stayed some time at home as the children were little and with one year age difference. ... They were looking for a young, educated woman to care for the children constantly. She [the female employer] returned at her job, and they both were at work all day long.

These cases illustrate and confirm the results of other research showing that most women migrants in Greece have filled the care gap left by women entering the productive work. In the context of 'rudimentary' (Lyberaki 2008, 18) or 'insufficient and inadequate' (Vianello 2009, 187) welfare states in Greece and Italy, the productive work of Greek and Italian women created the need to cover domestic and care work. Female migrants then served as the '*deae ex machina*' ('just-in-time

goddesses' Lyberaki (2008, 12) performing domestic and care work and facilitating Greek women's entry into the productive sector.

A second point is the interviewees' engagement in informal jobs and bargaining within their informal economic activities. Almost all report working informally. Sometimes, they combined informal and formal employment to comply with the procedures for their legalised stay in Greece, as Arlinda highlights:

I was doing two jobs, one with a regular contract and the other informally so that I could get some extra cash that we were just putting aside.

The interviewees explained how they bargained their informal working status with the aim to increase their financial resources:

Mimoza: Both jobs [Mimoza was doing] were unreported as it was worth it for the employers and me. They were paying me directly in cash.

Similar situations appear in the accounts of other interviewees, such as Rovená, Denisa, Elona and Migena, who state that they were paid in cash for their informal work. Rovená reports that working informally best suited her and her employers they did not have to pay taxes. She knew that if she were a declared employee, then her pay would be lower, hence this mutual arrangement. As Vaiou (2002) elaborates, migrants were attracted to informal sector of southern European countries, and the state allowed the informal sector to fill the care gap. Working informally created arrangements that allowed migrant women to save more money but also as many of them were illegalised migrants Lyberaki (2008, 16). Thus, female domestic care workers appear to be active subjects in a continuous process of bargaining.

However, informal domestic care work also entails many disadvantages, starting with the lack of regulation by national labour codes. Women involved in this sector are deprived of any labour right and access to the social security scheme (Michel 2011) and may be subjected to low pay and long working hours. Furthermore, the lack of regular contracts and payment of social insurance contributions hinders them from applying for regular residency cards. For instance, Migena tells that the process of getting a residency card was very difficult for her. She had mostly worked informally and did not have the social security stamps necessary to apply for the residency card. As explained by Hatziprokopiou (2006), these stamps prove that the employers have registered the employee and paid contributions for the employee's social insurance. Consequently, only applicants who were

formally employed could obtain residency permits, and the women, who were mostly employed informally, were disadvantaged in this regard (Hatziprokopiou 2006). Vullnetari (2012) and Gemi (2015) highlight similar points. For example, in 1998, in the first regularisation programme conducted by the Greek government, Albanian migrant women made up only 17 per cent of the Albanian migrants who applied (Vullnetari 2012, 71).

Moreover, Migena, Juli and Elona report that often they had to work extra hours and sometimes had no day off during the week. Nevertheless, they tell that they needed to work to save money and gain their employers' much-needed support to find other jobs or even 'a good and not expensive paediatrician' as says Elona. Employers also helped cope with administrative issues and the difficult application procedures for residency permits. For instance, Rovená tells:

It was necessary to have a good relationship with her [Rovená's employer]. She and her husband were very well connected, and I needed their help if I wanted to apply for my residency card. ... I didn't need holidays back then but rather a good relationship with my employers.... After her [Rovená's employer] parents passed away, she and her husband helped me find another job, as a nurse, with a regular contract and paid insurance. ... If it weren't for them, I could never have gotten a residency permit. ... I still keep regular contact with her [Rovená's employer] and her daughter.

Rovená's case illustrates the bargaining between working informally (with no labour rights and social security) and the advantages of employers' support in a wide range of issues. Female migrants and their employers have a negotiating relationship. Similar accounts of combining informal with formal jobs as a means to make money and obtain legalised residency permits can be found in Bonizzoni's (2016) research on migrant women in Italy.

The third main point is the low-skilled jobs these women take on, such as domestic care workers, cleaners in offices and factory workers. These jobs are beneath the educational level of most women. The lowest educational degree obtained by the women is a high school diploma, while four women graduated from university. Nevertheless, these jobs appear sufficient to grow their financial capital. The figure of skilled migrant working in low-skilled jobs beneath their qualifications appears in much research (Morokvasic and de Tinguy 1993; Gërmenji and Gëdeshi 2008; Kofman et al. 2000). Parreñas (2001) refers to this situation as contradictory class mobility, as women undertake less socially valued but better paid off jobs for a reduced social status and improved financial situation. Similarly, Vaiou (2002) reports that issue that migrant women in Greece worked in positions below their skills and education but better paid than jobs in Albania. This contradictory situation of Albanian migrants may also be described by what Nieswand (2011, 3) calls the 'status

paradox of migration': migrant's qualifications are undervalued in destination countries, and they accept lower, informal positions, resulting in a loss of social status in the receiving country. At the same time, amid global economic inequalities, the higher financial capital in the receiving country gives migrants higher status in their native countries as they send remittances or return. Similarly, the researched women bargain with their qualifications by doing informal, low-skilled jobs and bargain with their informal employers to increase their financial capital. Their experiences fit with the framework of the paradoxical status of migration, as is further observed upon their return to Tirana.

6.2.2 *Engaging in pendular migration practices*

As already shown in this research and other studies (Vullnetari 2012; Olsson 2014) Albanian women are much more present in the migration process than the imaginary of post-1991 Albanian migration represents. As seen in this study, Albanian migrant women not only migrate internally and internationally but also engaged in multiple migration trajectories, combining internal and international migration, and in circular migration practices, as illustrated in the case of Denisa. Among the women discussed in this chapter, Denisa embraces pendular migration, traveling back and forth and spending several months a year in her country of origin as defined by Fokkema, Cela and Witter (2016, 142). Though it is one particular case, I think it is noteworthy to go more in depth into her experience and highlight some moments of her migration process.

Denisa tells that she worked with several families, Greek and foreigners, in a coastal area, where many people owned summer houses. With her primary objective to save money, she says that she was very lucky as she could live free at her parents' home. She worked only from March to October, and during the winter, she stayed with her husband, child and parents-in-law in Gjirokaster:

That was an excellent solution as I could work [in Greece]. On the other side, I was spending about half of the year with my family, so that they would not forget me [laughs]. ... I could take care of my daughter... and I was quite serene as the money was not lacking, and I knew I had a job, quite a fruitful job indeed.

The choice of the pendular migration is appropriate for Denisa as it allows her to be the primary breadwinner in her family but also continue as much as possible to perform her role of mother and caregiver. This case accords with Morokvasic (2003) and Dahinden's (2010) research on pendular migration by women who move without settling in the destination. Pendular migration with a neighbouring country is related to constructed gender roles positioning women as caregivers

(Morokvasic 2003; Dahinden 2010) and allows them to combine productive work and caring for the family (Dahinden 2010, Morokvasic 2003), to be a 'transnational mother' (Hondagneu Sotelo and Avila 1997, 549). It should be noted that this position of transnational mother is possible as Denisa's parents-in-law have stepped into her caregiver role by taking care of her child while she is away. In most cases, this transference of the caregiver role enables migration by mothers, as highlighted in the findings of Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (1997) and Olwig (1999). The case of Denisa, a breadwinner in Greece and caregiver in Albania, exemplifies the notion of transnational double presence (Morokvasic 2008; Vianello 2013) when women have a presence in two different realities, the public and the private sphere, paid labour and the family, the destination and the sending country. Denisa thus can combine the breadwinner and the maternal role.

Another characteristic of Denisa's situation should be added. She can move between Albanian and Greece as she has obtained a residency permit based on her mother's Greek ethnicity. With a Greek residency permit and later a Greek passport, Denisa can easily move between the two countries and construct a transnational double presence. Doing so would be very difficult if she were staying illegally or being in the process of legalisation in Greece. This would entail a very complicated process of re-entering Greece, as shown by Olsson's (2014) work with migrant women in Greece. Those women without a legalised presence in Greece cannot go back and forth between Greece and Albania due to the physical difficulties and high costs of the illegalised border crossing (Olsson 2014). The case of Denisa is particular as most of her migration project follows a pendular trajectory. Nevertheless, other cases of circular trajectories may be observed among returnee women upon their return to Albania, as shown in the next section.

6.3 Return from abroad and life in Tirana

In this final sub-chapter, I elaborate on the participants' reasons for returning to Albania and settling in Tirana rather than their hometowns. It should be recalled that the interviewed women returned before the economic crisis of late 2000s in Greece and Italy. Thus, unlike other recent research on return migration in Albania, the economic crisis in the destination country does not appear among the reasons of return.

The move of these international migrants to Tirana is not simply a return migration but also a move to a new settlement, which makes it difficult to define their move as a simple return. It entails also a move to a new internal destination, in this case, Tirana. The reasons for returning to Albania often overlap with the reasons to move to Tirana, again illustrating the multiplicity of reasons that lie behind the migration process. Given that the return is a double move, I first expand

on the reasons these women return to Albania and then the reasons they choose to move to Tirana instead of their hometowns.

6.3.1 Returning from abroad

First, based on the interviews, some women returned to Tirana to invest in their own business. As Elona says:

We [Elona and her husband] were planning our return. ... We wanted to start our business ... We thought that probably it was time to return back and start this adventure of ours.

Returning to invest in Tirana also motivates Mimoza. She says that she returned to Albania with her family (husband and children) as she and her husband had saved some money and wanted to invest in Albania. They now run a dry-cleaning shop. Juli also says that she returned to invest in her own business as hairdresser, knowing that she could have more opportunities in Albania than Greece. As well, Juli needed support to care for her child. Juli says that after divorcing from her husband, she lived in Greece with her child and had difficulty working and caring for the child as she had no other support. In Albania, she could more easily devise a solution the child care and housework: she could hire a domestic worker. Juli's return project is thus driven by the better opportunity to transfer her caregiver role to a domestic worker lower paid than in Greece. Migration trajectories here link to women's constructed caregiver role. Irida, too, returned because of a double motivation: investing in her own business and caring for her parents. Irida adds that she needed to build a successful business to continue to financially help her parents in Shkodër and at the same time be closer to them.

That brings us to the women's second main reason for returning from abroad: caring for family members. In addition to Irida, Rovená and Denisa clearly mention this reason in their interviews. Gender affects the return project as caring for relatives, in these cases parents, falls under women's responsibility. In accordance with Sri Tharan (2010), being close to an ageing parent is often a main motivations driving migrant women to return to their native countries. Rovená clearly states that her main reason for returning to Albania was the care for her parents because they were quite old. Close to Fier, she can go to Fier almost every weekend to check on her parents' needs. Similarly, Denisa reports that after an additional migration trajectory to England, she has returned to Albania to take care of her parents-in-law:

And I came back last August. ... My parents-in-law are quite old now. They have more health issues. It is the time they need more care and attention. They need me here now.

Having Greek citizenship serves as significant capital, facilitating Denisa's various migration trajectories.

Here, we come to the third motivation for returning to Albania: obtaining (or failing to obtain) legal residency permits or passport. Similar results arise in other research on Albanian return migration (e.g. Mai and Paladini 2013; Gemi 2015; Kopliku 2016). Marta recounts that she returned to Albania with her child because of the impossibility of obtaining legal residency in Switzerland:

My husband moved to another European country illegally. We could not obtain the residency permits, so we had to leave Switzerland.

Arlinda tells that it was difficult and expensive to continue the regularisation of the documents process for all the family members, so Arlinda and her husband decided to return while their children remained in Greece with student documents. Similarly, Migena and her husband returned to Tirana because she could not succeed in regularising the residency permits. She had worked informally, as mentioned in section 6.2.2., and could not succeed in getting a Greek residency card. She adds:

The situation in Albania [in 2002] was not as bad as during the 1990s, which made our return not that painful. ... In Tirana, we could do a master to complete our education and find a good job, an office job. ... There seemed to be a lot of opportunities as a lot of Greek banks and companies were already established in Tirana. ... We thought it could be easy for us to find a job in these companies as we knew Greek and English very well.

In 2012, Migena worked for a Greek-owned bank. Her statement illustrates the complexity of return motivations and the sometimes difficulty in clearly determining whether return is voluntary. On one hand, there is the constraining condition of being an illegalised domestic worker migrant in Greece, but on the other hand, there is the attraction of working in a better, more prestigious job.

In contrast, migrants with long-term residency permits and passports often return to Albania to open businesses, find jobs in their professions or stay close to their families. These migrants are somewhat secure in their standing as they can easily leave Albania again if need arises. Rovenia presents a typical case. She returned to Albania after obtaining a ten-year residency permit in Greece

that allows her to move again to Greece if she wanted. Similar, Juli decided to return after securing legal documents in Greece so that, as she says, ‘in case of disappointment in Albania’, she could return to Greece or leave for another country. Irida and Mimoza narrate common stories: they have returned with ‘the reassurance’, as they say, of moving again if their return does not work. Possessing so-called ‘regular papers’ is considered to be a ‘safety valve’ for many Albanians (Mai and Paladini 2013, 50). Becoming citizen of the European Union (or Schengen area) country is regarded as the most valuable status as then migrants can easily return to and leave Albania.

6.3.2 Return by moving to a new destination, Tirana

As mentioned, the return of these women is a double move as it also entails a new move to the city of Tirana instead of their hometowns. The conceptualisation of return migration as part of a wider migration process, as a movement to another place in which the migrant has to re-adjust settlement (Ley and Kobayashi 2009, Sondhi 2013), becomes concrete (and literal) for most women discussed in this chapter. They return to their country and to a new destination. In this section, I focus on their reasons for choosing to engage in another migration trajectory to Tirana rather than returning to their hometowns. In the interviews, the women indicate that they moved to Tirana due to the greater opportunities the city offers, particularly investment, employment and children’s education. Let us examine their reasons for moving to Tirana in more detail.

First, Tirana is seen to offer more opportunities for setting up businesses. For instance, Juli says she knew that low demand made it not worthwhile to open a business in her native Tepelene, whereas Tirana was a growing, developing city:

My cousins [in Tepelene and Tirana] had told me not to attempt to open my parukeri [beauty salon] in Tepelene as it would soon fail. Apparently, people are leaving Tepelene, and you see, Tirana is growing every day, and there are so many women and girls here who go to the beauty salons.

Here, moving to Tirana is not a fortuitous choice but a deliberate, informed decision based on one’s social relations in Albania. That fits with Cassarino’s (2004) and Ley and Kobayashi’s (2009) emphasis on preparedness as a significant pattern of return migration; return is thus anticipated, and transnational connections contribute to the preparation phase, as mentioned by Juli. In addition, Irida shares that she knew that she could build a more successful business in Tirana ‘because people in Tirana are in a better financial situation so they can spend more money in beauty care’. Mimoza also says that they decided to come to Tirana as ‘it is only in Tirana that you can invest well, as there are more opportunities’.

She also adds that Tirana also has the best schools. Second, Migena and Rovená tell that they decided to move to Tirana to find good jobs that better match their education and skills. As a growing city with numerous private, state, and international institutions, Tirana appears to offer more employment opportunities than the women's cities of origin, Pogradec and Fier, respectively.

Rovená brings out the third reason: she also returned to Tirana as she wanted to continue to live independently. After so many years apart from her family and relatives, it would be difficult to have them 'all around', she says. Boccagni and Decimo (2013) explain that migrants' increased personal autonomy or the individualisation of migrants may create social tensions between them and their families and communities in their hometowns. Similarly, Irida moved to Tirana not only for the business opportunities but also for the ability to live on her own and be near her parents at the same time. In this context, Tirana emerges as a 'middle way' between living abroad and in one's hometown, a locus that allows one to be closer to one's parents while preserving some autonomy constructed through international migration.

A particular case is that of Marta. She moved to Tirana instead of her native Fier as her parents-in-law had moved there while she was abroad. Following a patrilocal family structure in which wives move into the house of the husband and the parents-in-law (Kaser 2014), Marta returned to Tirana to live with her in-laws.

6.3.3 Economic activities: manifesting the entrepreneurial spirit

Economic reasons and investing in Albania are among the main reasons for returning from abroad for some women in this chapter. Among the interviewed women, only Arlinda had retired from the labour market after returning to Tirana. The other women have been employed or invested in their own businesses. They mobilise three types of resources upon migration to Tirana: social networks, know-how (e.g. their new skills, work experience and language) and financial resources.

First, the narratives of those employed in paid jobs highlight a significant common feature: the role of the social networks in finding jobs in Tirana. Rovená, Migena and Denisa emphasise the crucial role of their relatives, friends and acquaintance networks in their job searches. Migena tells:

My cousin was working in a private bank; she was in a very high position. ... She helped me to start work in another private bank, a Greek-owned private bank. ... I spoke Greek and English very well, and that helped me too, knowing these languages.

Second, their interviewees state that the know-how they gained in Greece helped them find employment. For example, Rovená and Migena found jobs in Greek-owned businesses due to their strong knowledge of the Greek language and their experience in Greece. Migena worked in a private, Greek-owned bank, and Rovená first in a Greek-owned shopping mall and then as a nurse in a Greek-owned hospital.

In addition the know-how and the social networks, the women have also mobilised their financial capital gained abroad to succeed in entrepreneurial objectives. In this section, I expand more on their entrepreneurship experience as it involves certain gender patterns. Elona, Juli, Mimoza and Irida saw investing on their own businesses as their main reason for returning to Tirana. Elona says that when she and her husband returned from Greece, they knew that they wanted to open a bakery as she had worked in a bakery for many years and knew ‘*how to do things*’. Investing their savings and know-how gained while abroad seems to be a common strategy for some returning migrants, both couples and women alone.

Mimoza’s story is similar to Elona’s. Mimoza and her husband had planned to open something ‘*of their own*’ in Tirana, using the savings they had set aside and with the know-how they had acquired while in Greece. They decided to open a dry-cleaning shop. Juli and Irida returned from abroad, one divorced and the other single, with the wish to establish hairdressing and beauty centres. As stated, they had both explored the possibilities of opening businesses through preliminary contacts with their relatives and friends living in Albania. They, too, making use of their savings and professional knowledge acquired abroad. It appears that they actively participated in the process of migration by gaining professional knowledge with the aim of opening up better opportunities for their lives and work. As found by other researchers (Kopliku 2016), family businesses are common investments for returning migrants. Service businesses dominate among return migrants’ entrepreneurship initiatives as they offer good self-employment opportunities, are more affordable financially and are less risky (Kopliku 2016).

Let us turn now to their concrete entrepreneurship experiences, particularly the process of registering a business, doing paperwork and following procedures. Juli and Irida report bureaucratic difficulties while trying to start their business, being sent from one office to another and not being taken seriously as they are women.

Irida: You cannot imagine the time I spent going from one office to another to obtain documents and for other procedures. ... It was impossible to sign the rental contract as the owners said that they could not trust me, where my money was coming from. ... Sometimes similar doubts were being raised even in state offices.

Sometimes my brother came with me. It was easier to have him with me as they did not consider me to be an unaccompanied young woman anymore.

Irida using the tactic of bringing her brother along to overcome the discrimination and constraints imposed on her as a woman.

Juli, for her part, says that she *'had screamed louder than a man'* with the team building her beauty centre as they were not taking her seriously and delaying the works. She adds that what she *'hated'* most was the oft-asked question: *'Why does not your husband come to deal with this?'* She heard it while she was handling the needed documents to get a licence to open her business and to register in various tax offices.

I've got so angry sometimes; it's unbelievable. ... I was at the tax office for some registration, all this stuff, you know. And I was just dragged from one desk to another, unbelievable. ... I was talking in anger mostly to myself, you know, as I didn't know to whom shout. And one of the ladies working there came close to me and said to me, with a low voice, you know, 'Why doesn't your husband come to deal with this? ... It's easier for a man to deal with "office issues"'. ... My God, at that moment, I just went crazy, and I thought, 'No more smiling and politeness. I'm just gone yell at everyone here. Otherwise, it's in vain'.

Juli also says she often faced with mistrust when she claimed that it was her own project and her own money:

I needed some documents at the Labour Office, and I was explaining all my story and everything... The employees at the office there started to ask me 'Oh, that's so good your husband is giving you the money to open the parukeri'. And I said, 'No, it is my own money. I am divorced'. You cannot imagine the look in their eyes, and the smiling, you know that smile that meant 'Yeah, yeah, as if we believe you'. The worst of things is that you feel angry and humiliated in the same time as I have been craving at work so many years to save this money, and now instead of some support [for investing] I face a wall as I don't have a husband. ... I'm offering some people a job, but this is not important; the important thing is that I don't have a husband. ... Oh, I just get angry now that I'm talking to you. ... Do you hear my voice? [Laughs] I've done practice to make it like this, raucous' the smoke has helped me a little [laughs]. ... I need such a voice, so I can look like a man [laughs loudly].

Unlike Irida who brings her brother along while dealing with the procedures to open her business, Juli uses the tactic of adopting a masculine behaviour, or yelling with a raucous voice, as

she says. Gender influences the process of establishing a business, putting women in an unfavourable situation compared to men not only in informal relations but also in state institutions, whose laws and strategies presumably promote gender equality. Statistics (INSTAT 2016) show that women made up 31.3 per cent of entrepreneurs in 2015. However, this increase should be viewed with caution as the majority of these enterprises are small enterprises (1–4 employees). Despite the growth indicators of women entrepreneurs, their businesses may face the risk of stagnation or even failure in the long term. Moreover, almost half (43 per cent) of the female-owned or -administrated enterprises are concentrated in Tirana. Albania had no state policy or programme promoting female entrepreneurship until the Action Plan for Women Entrepreneurs 2014–2020 was drafted in 2014. In an analysis of women's entrepreneurship in Albania, Beqo and Gehrels (2014) recount the difficulties women entrepreneurs face in Albania. Discrimination against women occurs during the process of opening the business, navigating the bureaucracy and handling financial issues. Women have more difficulty getting bank loans than men as they own less property. In this context, Juli and Irida say they used their savings from abroad to open their businesses in Tirana.

Mimoza and Elona did not report any gender-related difficulty during the initial phases of establishing businesses as they largely passed this task to their husbands. As Elona illustrates:

Altin went to the notary offices and the license office and everything. I went there only to sign. Why lose all that time when nobody would listen to me but to him anyway? I had so many other things to do with the preparation of the venue and so on.

As married women, Mimoza and Elona overcome gender constraints simply by avoiding them, which may also be considered to be a tactic adopted by them in an unfavourable context. They anticipate, as Elona states, that '*nobody would listen*' to them, so they shift the task to the male figure. Like Irida, who uses her brother, Mimoza and Elona appoint their husbands to handle the unfavourable gender environment of business procedures. Similarly, Beqo and Gehrels (2014) report that in the absence of a fair treatment for women, women entrepreneurs often find a male figure to help them move forward the process of opening a business.

I end this section with the case of Marta, which is somewhat different than the other women. She returns not for the aim of investing in her own business but due to failure to regularise her stay in Switzerland. Marta was a housewife throughout her stay abroad, but she learned tailoring from the daughter of her Albanian neighbours while in Switzerland. Almost a year after her return, she started a small, informal tailoring business:

That [tailoring business] was very important to me. First of all, as I could finally have my work and have some income but also as I got to know other women and interact with them. I was tired of staying at home all the time, doing housework and watching TV.

She adds that her husband's family was not very happy with this action as according to them, she needed to care for the child, and the family did not need money. Marta's husband helped her financially at the beginning after she explained to him that the space for the tailoring business was in the same building where they lived. It was also a private space, not visible to the public, where she could also bring their daughter and care for her.

Marta engaged in twofold negotiations. To open this business, she had to assure her husband and his family that she would continue to care for their daughter and that the space where she worked was private. This twofold negotiation reassured her husband and his family that the traditional gender roles, Marta as the domestic caregiver and her husband as a breadwinner, would continue. The negotiation process for Marta while attempting to open her small business took place in the family sphere. Her shop was an informal one, and she did not attempt to register it or seek a permit. It was more an extension of her domestic space for her to earn some income and knit connections with other women. As in Eleni's case in Chapter 4, we see here how women's skills take on new value in the post-socialist market environment and how women mobilise these skills to increase their income (Gal and Kligman 2000) and their connections, as in the case of Marta.

At the time of the interview, Marta had shifted from the informal status to that of registered self-employed, continuing to work as a tailor and living alone with her daughter after divorcing from her husband, who was then living abroad. She recounts that her parents and the connections she had made through tailoring helped her overcome the challenges of the divorce and formalise her business.

6.3.4 Tirana as the space of entangled care chains

In this subsection, I focus on the negotiations and tactics these women undertake in their role as caregivers. Most interviewees stress this area, so it is worthy developing more. As seen, the possibility of transferring the caregiver role to another woman gave Juli one reason for returning to Albania. Other interviewees also shed light on the complex care chains among migrant women. Let us look at the care chain configurations brought out by the women discussed in this chapter.

In a first care chain configuration, the returned international migrant woman hires an internal migrant woman as a caregiver. Juli says:

Now that I have my own beauty salon, I spend most of the day working there. This is what I have to do if I want this to continue. ... My family lives in Tepelene, and here in Tirana I'm alone with my son, so I hired a woman who is also from Tepelene. She is a very nice person, and she cooks and cleans. She practically does everything in the house until I return from work.

Juli's case involves a complex care chain in which internal migrants work as domestic workers for return migrants who are engaged in productive work. This also indicates a status paradox of migration: in Greece, Juli worked as domestic worker, and now as a returnee, she employs an internal migrant to take on her care work. Mimoza also claims to have employed two internal migrants to work primarily in the house but also in the shop if she needs support. These two internal migrants are from poor, rural families, and she tries to help them as much as possible, as she was helped when she first came to Greece, as she says. Migrant women who once were in need of work and support in a new place are now in a position to give work and support to other migrant women.

A second configuration is illustrated by Denisa, who previously worked as domestic care worker in Greece. Returned from her international migration, Denisa still finds employment as a domestic worker for a wealthy family that migrated to Tirana from southern Albania. We see here the configuration opposite the first but again intertwining internal and international migration trajectories. Denisa says:

I have a very relaxed work schedule. I need to go to work only during the mornings, do all the housework, pay the bills, electricity and water, shop for the groceries or anything else they ask me for, cook, leave everything ready for the family when they return from their jobs. ... It is very appropriate for me as I have the rest of the day for me and my family [husband and parents-in-law].

Denisa's case not only illustrates a particular care chain: a return international migrant works as domestic worker for an internal migrant. She also demonstrates the family solidarity configuration of care as she takes care of her parents-in-law.

This brings us to the third case of care chain: the intra-familial care chain. We saw earlier that Denisa migrated to Greece, and her parents-in-law took on her caregiver role. Next, Denisa returned from abroad principally to care for her parents-in-law, who were getting old and needed closer care and support. Likewise, Migena says that both her parents, who lived only a few minutes away, helped her, transporting her child to school and doing cooking and shopping. As Vullnetari and King (2015) highlight, there is an intersection of mutual care within the family: grandparents take

care of the grandchildren but later will rely on the care of their children. These cases show how complex the care chains configurations are and how the place migrant women occupy in these configurations may vary by the migration phase.

6.3.5 Circular, return and remigration projects: what's next for these women?

From the interviews, three main points can be drawn concerning the returnees' future migratory plans. Some express no wish to migrate again, while others articulate a strong desire to emigrate again. Yet others, primarily those possessing residency permits from other countries, do not totally exclude the possibility of migrating again and engage in circular migration with their destination countries.

Arlinda and Migena say they do not plan to emigrate again. Arlinda tells that she has already settled well in Tirana, and her children visit her and her husband often, so she has no particular reasons to think about migrating again. It appears that Arlinda's main motivations for migration—her financial situation and her children's education—have been satisfied, and no other reason pushes her to reconsider the option of migration. As well, Migena reports that she worked in Greece for a long time and does not want to do 'those kind of job' again.

Caring for one's parents is another reason that prevents plans for long-term international migration. Denisa, for example, says that her daughter lives in the UK, so '*the biggest issue is solved*'. She adds that she lives in Tirana with her husband and parents-in-law, who '*need more care now than before*'. Similarly, Rovenia states she cannot leave Albania as long as her parents are alive as she could not bear to leave them alone at this age. However, she adds that later, she could easily return to Greece. Caring for family members again emerges as a significant gendered factor informing the migration project. Additionally, Rovenia tells that she visits Greece regularly with a long-term residency permit. Possessing the long-term residency permit allows her coping with the care for her parents and maintain her networks and contacts in Greece.

Here, we come to the second topic in this section: returnees who engage in circular migration trajectories and transnational experiences. This activity is mostly made possible as they possess regular residency documents in their host countries. For example, Irida says she maintains her relations in Italy and goes there a couple of times a year to keep up with new fashion trends and hair styles and products. She adds that she does not want to cut all her ties with Italy and needs to renew her residency permit as '*one day it is possible that I return to Italy for good*'. Like Rovenia, circular migration allows Irida to combine caring for and being closer to her parents while running her own business and maintaining her transnational ties with Italy. According to Mai and Paladini (2013),

documented returnees—migrants with Italian citizenship or a permanent/long-term (five years or more) residency permit—return to Albania as they feel that they have completed their migratory experience but still maintain structural links with Italy. In this case, Irida's circular migration is enabled by her legal Italian documents and driven by her need to advance in her new profession.

Furthermore, the cases of Irida and Rovenia confirm Black and King's (2004, 80) claim that return migrants 'continue to value the professional contacts and other social networks they have made abroad after their return, and indeed in many cases continue to travel abroad'. In research on return migration to the city of Shkodra, Kopliku (2016, 112) contends that distinguishing the permanent returnee from the transnational migrant can be difficult as often migrants organise their lives between their home and host countries. Having regular papers of another country serves as capital and allows return migrants to make more flexible plans, knowing that, unlike other Albanian citizens, they can leave Albania at any time. None of the women who possess these documents express any concrete wish to migrate again but leave the possibility open.

A third point arises in connection to Marta, who is the only returnee to openly express a wish to emigrate again. Marta says that she would like to migrate due to her daughter and the pressure she feels as a divorced mother:

My work is going well, and I have many clients, but I am not happy here. My parents are in Fier, and here [in Tirana] I am alone with my daughter. It's not easy for a woman alone with her child, especially when you are divorced. ... I always have this feeling that people know that I am divorced. Someplace else could be better. We would be on our own, and in western countries, they support you when you are divorced woman with a child. ... I don't want my daughter to be raised here. I'm trying to gather some information where I could migrate, so that I don't have to migrate illegally or with fake documents as I did before. Now I have my daughter, and I have to think about her first. I've heard that the American lottery seems to be a good idea. ... I would like to leave together with my daughter so that she could go to better schools ... and not go through my experiences.

Interestingly, Marta's professional and economic situation is not the main motivation pushing her to migrate again. Instead, it is the gendered prejudices and the social weight that she feels as a divorced mother and pushes her to desire to raise her daughter in a place other than Tirana. Paradoxically, the Tirana imagined as modern and free exhibits the gendered prejudices towards the divorced mother, along with young women living on their own, as shown in Chapter 5. Monika Kocaqi (2013), a researcher on violence against women, emphasises that divorced women in Albania are stigmatised more than men primarily as marriage remains a highly socially accepted value. Similar accounts about

divorced women are reported concerning Chinese (Lévy 2015) and Turkish female emigrants (Erel 2009). These analyses show how in addition to economic reasons, escaping from prejudices and discriminatory contexts is another motivation for divorced women to migrate. Additionally, Marta's interview reveals how the migratory project for her daughter and her is based on the contrast of the 'equal western countries' to Tirana. Against Tirana, Marta projects a less prejudicial and more supportive 'abroad'. Her case again illustrates how the 'imaginaries of equality' influence and shape women's migration-related projects and actions, as highlighted by Riano (2015) in the case of Latin American women's migration to Europe.

6.4 Conclusions—discussing the findings

This chapter analyses the experiences of female migrants who returned to Tirana after migrating to the neighbouring countries of Italy and Greece for other than educational reasons. In what follows, I start with the overall findings and then emphasise three particular inputs.

Overall, the narratives of the women engaged in a double trajectory migration, returning from abroad by moving to a new destination such as Tirana, shed light on their multiple, overlapping reasons and motives for migration. Contrary to the dominant portrayal of Albanian international migration in which men migrate to help their families economically, and women join later in family reunification, some narratives in this chapter show that single and married women migrate on their own to financially support their families. When migrating internationally, women not only transgress the borders of accepted gender roles. Moreover, faced with the impossibility of entering other countries legally, they also cross the borders through illegalised ways, contradicting the dominant figure of Albanian migration that attributes risk and physical strength to masculinity.

In the interviews, it may be observed that the women's double move is a complex process precipitated by various reasons to return from international migration by moving to Tirana instead of their native cities or villages. The participants' multiple principal reasons for leaving their destination countries and returning to Albania are the desire to invest in their native country, the need to care for family members and the impossibility of a legalised stay in the destination country. Tirana is chosen over their other hometowns as it offers better opportunities for entrepreneurship initiatives, employment and children's education. It also serves as an intermediate space that allows the women to be closer to their parents while preserving the autonomous life to which they became accustomed while abroad. Some of the cases analysed also show that return is not permanent but may be part of circular migration trajectories and transnational relations with the destination country. These trends accord with the findings from other research on migration (Cassarino 2004;

Black and King 2004; Jeffrey and Morison 2011; Dahinden 2010; Ley and Kobayashi 2009), particularly on Albanian migration (Mai and Paladini 2013; Kopliku 2016).

I now turn to three particular inputs of this chapter. First, these women display bargaining power in relation to their economic activity abroad and their status paradox of migration. Their bargaining power first emerges in their complex relations with their employers abroad that involve both dependency and support. Dependency arises from the absence of regular formal contracts and the need for regular work contracts for those wishing to legalise their status. Albanian migrant women depend on their employers for their salary, working hours and holidays. At the same time, (in)formal employers assist the migrants in overcoming administrative issues and creating new social networks. Sometimes, employers are mobilised as a resource in the process of residency permit legalisation, as also examined by Bonizzoni (2016) in the case of Italian immigration. Moreover, informality is not a one-direction relation benefiting only the employers but also gives advantages to migrant women, who prefer to increase their income by not declaring it formally. They acquire negotiating and bargaining skills in their relationships with their international employers. All these bargaining processes account for the agency exhibited by women in their migration trajectories.

Second, the financial and knowledge resources these women earn while abroad indicates what Nieswand (2011) calls the status paradox of migration. During migration, female migrants often experience devaluation of their social status, accepting jobs in low-income segments of the labour market, including the informal sector. Nevertheless, the acceptance of these positions involves a bargaining process. Upon returning to Tirana, these women's economic and social status increases again due to their financial capital and knowledge, which they often invest in enterprises, self-employment and employment. Confirming the status paradox of migration, they regain and even exceed the status they once left behind.

A further point in this change of status through migration can also be illustrated by the complex care chain configurations in which some interviewed women occupy various positions. The interviews show that these women take on care jobs in Greece and Italy to fill the care gap and allow other women to engage in productive work, putting themselves in an international care chain. After returning to Albania, some of these same women are still in care chain nets but now in the position of employer, not employee. To fill the care gap in Albania and engage in productive work, entrepreneurial initiatives in some cases, these same women hire internal migrants as domestic and care workers. This illustrates Tirana's embeddedness in entrenched global care chains. It also demonstrates the women's regained status in Albania based primarily on their increased financial capital. As mentioned in the previous chapters, care chain configurations appear frequently in this analysis, with women often situated in various positions in them.

In this chapter, it can be seen that the state is a significant actor in women's migration process. Boyd and Grieco (2003) argue that the decision to undertake a migratory project is not the same as being allowed to exit or to enter a particular country. These constraints affect men and women differently, as frequently highlighted in this chapter. The policies of nation-states are main actors in the gendered international migration process, limiting the pathways of border crossing. As well, internal labour and welfare policies influence the types of jobs for male and female migrants may access, as shown in the case of migrants' informal care work.

However, there is more to consider about the role of the state, and I now turn to the core of this second input: the masculine state that returnees face upon their return to Albania. Whereas their experience abroad is characterised mostly by informal negotiations with employers and only a few interactions with the state bureaucracy, the challenges they face differ. Advancing a feminist theory of the late modernist state, Wendy Brown (1995) examines the ways in which gender clearly marks state power. The masculine state described by Brown (1995) is diffuse, encountered and experienced by subjects on different scales. In deepening involvement with the state, women exchange dependency on individual men for regulation by contemporary institutions and processes of male domination (Brown 1995, 173). Protection codes are key technologies in which the state extends its masculine powers. For the returned female entrepreneurs discussed in this chapter, bureaucratic institutions are sites where the state becomes tangible. As shown, when encountering state institutions, women require protection by and from men. They employ tactics as being accompanied by a male relative and embodying masculine behaviours. Paradoxically, they instrumentalise the same power whose dominance they attempt to challenge.

Third, and finally, most women interviewed exhibit a clear entrepreneurial spirit, much more visible upon their return to Tirana, challenging the dominant post-communist configuration of gender relations: entrepreneurship for men and domesticity for women (Heyns 1995). In the post-communist space, women employees are associated with the public sector, which is perceived as more secure and relaxed, offering a fixed job schedule more appropriate for a caregiver—meaning a woman, as Gal and Kligman (2000) examine in their research on the post-socialist politics of gender. Thus, entrepreneurship is mostly related to masculinity and to the culturally defined masculine values, such as risk, competition, independence and aggression (Gal and Kligman 2000; Meshcherkina 2000). As Gal and Kligman (2000) emphasise, entrepreneurship is a matter of cultural expectations. In this case, after the fall of communism, women are expected to withdraw to the domestic sphere or stay in the public sector, and men to undertake entrepreneurship initiatives in the new, capitalist private sector.

However, women show their capacities and entrepreneurial spirit in mobilising their skills and resources to achieve their initiatives, even when small scale (Gal and Kligman 2000). In the same line, the analysis in this chapter shows that women constantly negotiate the spaces between public and private gender constraints to achieve their entrepreneurship initiatives. Not only do they handle structural and state masculinity, as mentioned, but they also challenge their relationships within the household, with their husbands and parents, by deciding to embark on entrepreneurial initiatives. The interviews also show that these women strategically activate their know-how and financial resources earned during migration to accomplish their entrepreneurial objectives.

Chapter 7: International student female returnees—nowhere at home

In this chapter, I intend to explore the experiences of female migrants who migrated with the aim of undertaking undergraduate or graduate studies and not specifically for economic or work reasons. I analyse a group of female student migrants who returned to Tirana after their international migratory trajectories. This group is distinct from the previous group of *international migrant women* first based on the purpose of migration: women in this group left for educational purposes. Second, unlike the women in the previous chapter who migrated in various ways, including illegalised ones, all the women in this group migrated with regular student visa and documents. Third, most of the women in the previous group migrated to neighbouring countries such as Greece and Italy, whereas the international student migrants moved to countries other than Italy and Greece.

The women in this chapter come from various cities in Albania but ended up living in Tirana upon completing their studies abroad. Again, I refer to them as having migrated on their own, or without the physical presence of their families. Among these seven women, only one was married, and the others were not in stable relationships or cohabiting at the time of the fieldwork. This group is composed of the following women.

Artemisa is 30 years old and from the city of Vlorë. She has a younger brother, who is also a student migrant in the United States. In 2000, she migrated to Germany, where she studied political science, obtaining a bachelor's and a master's. After that, she found a job as a research assistant at the same university. She obtained the legal residency documents but returned to Albania in 2008. Instead of returning to Vlore, her city of origin, she moved to Tirana, where in 2012, she worked at a television station and as adjunct lecturer. In 2012, she lived on her own in a rented studio in Komuna e Parisit, and in 2014, Artemisa moved again to Germany.

Beti is 31 years old and from the city of Durrës. While her family is from Dibër, they migrated to Durrës during the early 1990s. She has an older sister, who is married and lives in Durrës. In 1999, Beti migrated to Italy, where she studied communications, receiving a bachelor's and a master's degree. She then moved to France where she earned a doctorate in communication studies. In 2010, she returned to Albania but, like the other young women in this chapter, not to Durrës but to Tirana. In 2012, she worked as a university lecturer.²⁶ She first shared an apartment with a friend and later found a small apartment in Don Bosko, where she lived on her own in 2012.

Fiona is 28 years old and from the town of Kukës. Fiona has two younger sisters; one lives with their parents in Kukës, while the other works in Pristina, Kosovo. In 2002, Fiona migrated to

²⁶ To protect the interviewees' identities, I do not distinguish whether they worked for a private or a public university.

Romania, where she studied language and political studies at the undergraduate level. After three years of studies in Romania, she moved to the United Kingdom and graduated with a bachelor's and a master's in political economy. In 2010, she returned to T'irana. In 2012, she worked as university lecturer and consultant and living on her own in a small rented apartment in Don Bosko.

Egesta is 35 years old and from the town of Lezhë. Egesta has two younger sisters; one is married and lives in Vlora, her husband's city of origin, while the youngest sister lives with their parents in Lezhë. In 1995, Egesta left for Italy, where she studied psychology, earning a bachelor's and a master's. Upon graduating, she first worked for a travel agency and later for a centre providing support to migrants as a psychologist and social worker. She is a legal resident of Italy. In 2005, she returned to T'irana. In 2012, she worked for a television station and as consultant in various projects and lived on her own in a rented studio apartment in Komuna e Parisit.

Monika is 28 years old and from the city of Fier. She has no sisters or brothers. In 2003, Monika moved to T'irana to pursue a bachelor's in political sciences. After two years of undergraduate studies, she left for Italy, where earned a bachelor's and a master's in political economics. In 2009, she returned to T'irana, and in 2012, she was employed as a researcher for an NGO. She lived on her own in a rented studio apartment in Don Bosko.

Lindita is 28 years old and from the city of Vlorë. She has an older brother who is married and lives in Greece. In 2009, she left for Sweden, where she obtained a master's in business administration. Her scholarship required that she return to Albania upon graduating. In 2011, she returned to T'irana, and as of 2012, she was employed by an NGO and pursuing various other temporary projects. Lindita lived in a shared apartment with two young women in Komuna e Parisit.

Elida is 38 years old, is from the town of Dibër and has no sisters or brothers. She is the only married woman in this group and has a young daughter. In 1994, she first moved to T'irana with her partner to study. Afterward, in 2007, she moved on her own to Italy, where she did doctoral studies in public policy. She returned to T'irana in 2010, and in 2012, she was employed as a university lecturer. In 2012, she lived with her husband, daughter and parents in an owned apartment in Komuna e Parisit.

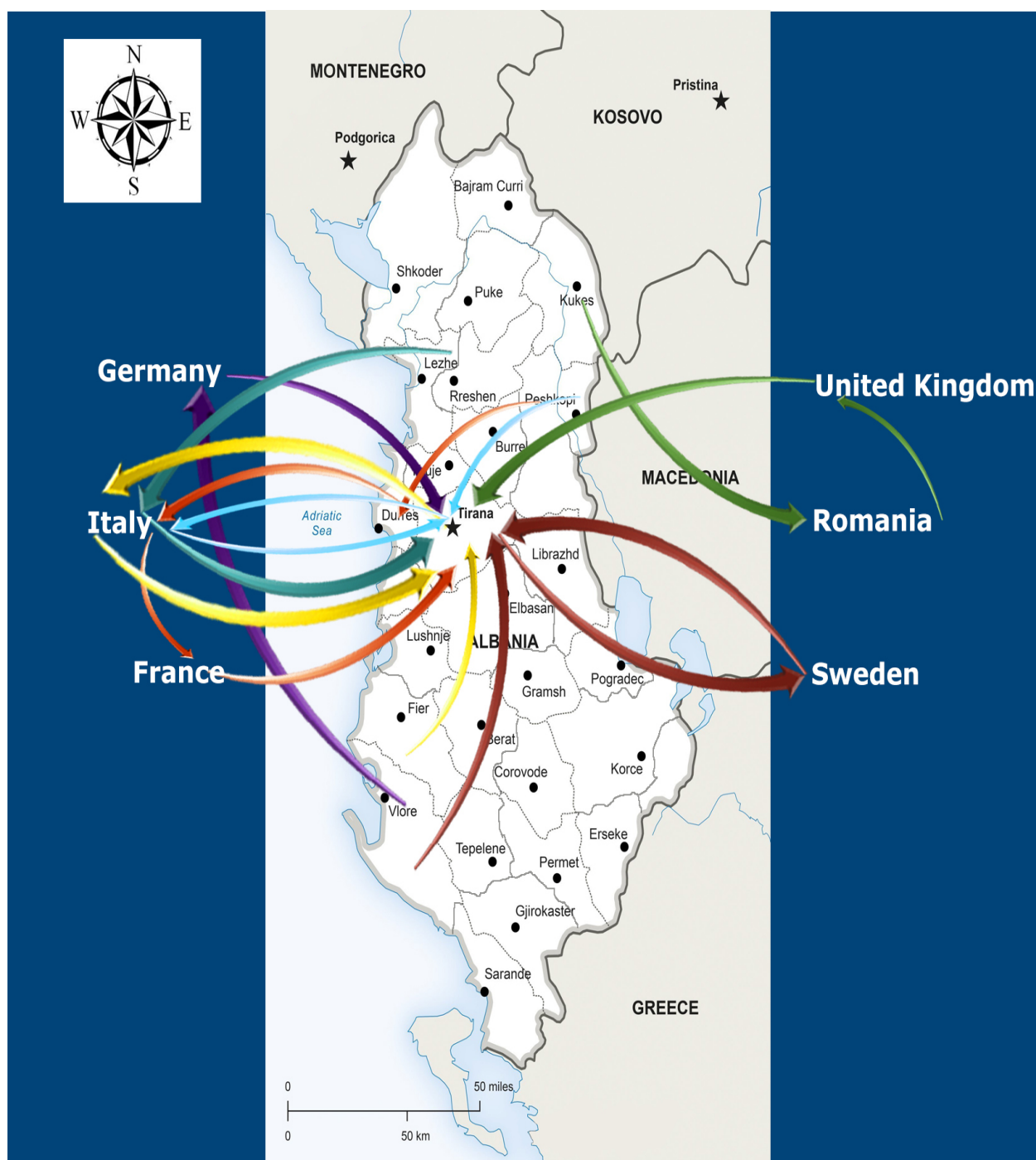


Figure 9: Migration trajectories of international female students migrating on their own.
Source: Map adapted by Taulant Topçiu for the purpose of this dissertation

7.1 Pre-migration phase—between individual wish and family support

Student migration in post-communist Albania began in the early 1990s.²⁷ Of the women in this chapter, Egesta was the first to migrate in 1995, and Lindita was the most recent in 2009. In this section, I explore their reasons for migrating to study abroad and the actors involved in the preparation phase of the student migration project.

7.1.1 Migration driven by a multiplicity of motivations

Although student migrants move for an obvious reason, further education, their narratives point to a wide range of motivations. Let us examine in more detail why these young women migrated abroad in more detail.

Artemisa: There were many reasons why I wanted to study in a European country, whether in Italy, Germany or France. First, I wanted to get a good education and later obtain a good and prestigious job.

As is clear in this statement, the plan to migrate abroad for education was not thoroughly thought out. Artemisa says she wanted to study abroad, no matter what the place. Investing in a better education to have more opportunities for a better job was the first reason mentioned by Artemisa. Especially since 1991, a university diploma obtained abroad has been perceived as an added value for finding a job back in Albania or abroad. Monika, too, says that finding a ‘good job’ abroad was what pushed her to continually apply to study in other countries. She says that she initially migrated from Fier to study political science in Tirana. There, she continued to apply to study abroad, and after two years, she managed to leave for Italy to study political economy. Elida and Lindita present similar (but also different) situations. Elida, the only married woman in this group, left for Italy to do a three-year doctoral programme that would qualify her for a better-paid job *‘in the private universities that were just about to be established’* in Tirana. Lindita, too, says that she went to Sweden for a two-year master’s degree to become familiar with institutions and to have more and better employment opportunities upon return through holding a valued master degree.

²⁷ Since 1992, increasing numbers of young people, mostly young and single, have gone abroad to study (Trimçev, Dakli and Ymeri 2005, 7–8). The figures for this category of migrants are not yet complete. In 2003–2004, approximately 9,000 Albanian students were studying abroad (Gërmenji and Milo 2011, 347). According to Zenelaga and Sotirofski (2011, 5) during the 2007–2008 academic year, the highest number of foreign students in Italy was from Albania, with 11,415 Albanian students at Italian universities.

Although education as a passport to a better job is chief among the reasons pushing women to migrate, other reasons also come to the fore. The words of Artemisa and Fiona bring us to a second reason.

Artemisa: I wanted to gather more experience, to see how it was to live for a while in a developed country, to live alone and be free and independent. I wanted this as living by myself for some years would help me come back stronger to Albania

Fiona: I had this strong desire to go abroad, and at the same time I wanted to succeed in my things [studies and work]. I was thinking that the only way to succeed was to study abroad. At the same time, I really wanted to leave the life of Kukes behind. It was just school and home and school and home. I knew I would go crazy were I unable to leave Kukes. ... When I left, it was mainly because of the mentality... as I wanted to leave Kukes and live a different life. ... It is so difficult for a young girl to live in a small city such as Kukes where everyone knows each other and everyone has eyes on you all the time. ... It's like living inside the Big Brother/ ... I needed to go somewhere else where I could be freer.

According to these women, migrating to study abroad is an escape from the lives they are leading in their cities of origin and from the constraining gender mentality in their hometowns. Living abroad is perceived as a way to find the promised land of freedom and independence. Migration appears to be the pursuit of anonymity and independence, putting physical distance between the migrant and her community, especially small cities where young women become subjected to stronger social control.

Thirdly, education may also be an explicit strategy in the service of migration. Artemisa says:

Moving abroad for studies was a safer way. You could get a visa and leave Albania like a normal person, not through speed boats, and I know very well what that means as I come from Vlore.²⁸

Additionally, Egesta tells:

I wanted to leave Albania. Many people were leaving in different ways, and to be honest, I really wanted to leave; it was like an obsession. ... But I was a very good student, had very good grades in high school and wanted to use them as a way to leave Albania and not go illegally. My parents would have never agreed to let

²⁸ Vlora is the southern coastal city from which most speed boats smuggling migrants to Italy have departed.

me migrate by illegal means. I am just saying [laughs]. Studying abroad was really the only option I was considering at that period.

Crossing borders through legalised ways (student visas) supplies a further motivation for young women student migrants. Although we saw in the last chapter that young women also migrate through illegalised ways, the dominant gender division among the different paths to migration is that women generally pursue legalised ways. In the context of constraining migration regimes, student migration serves as a valuable way for young women to leave Albania through legalised ways. As mentioned, complete data on Albanian student migration are still lacking, but current research (Trimcev et al. 2005) shows that Albania has sent more female students and professionals abroad than males. Furthermore, Zenelaga and Sotirofski (2011, 5) report that during the 2007–2008 academic year, 4,659 of the Albanian students in Italy were male, and 6,756 female. Furthermore, Egesta's quotation pinpoints parents' role in the possibility (or not) of migrating abroad. This brings us to the core of the next section: the critical role of parental support for these women's migration.

7.1.2 Making migration possible—relying on parents' support

In this section, the attention turns to parents' role, which is apparently significant and manifold. Similar to the findings discussed in Chapter 5, the interviews in this chapter show that parents also aim to offer their children better educational opportunities than available in Albania. In most cases, therefore, the young women and their parents make the decision together based on mutual consent. Egesta says:

I had made up my mind that I was going to study abroad, and if I would not succeed in the undergraduate studies, I would try again to go abroad for a master's degree. My parents wanted absolutely for me to study abroad too.

First, parents are visibly involved in the pre-migration motivation phase. Parents want their daughters to be educated abroad so they can secure better jobs and become socially mobile through education. Children's education is a significant value for Albanian families, across parents' education level (Danaj et al. 2005). Beti, for example, says that her parents moved from Dibër to Durrës in the early 1990s to give her 'better opportunities for study and work. Thus, they were dedicated to send me abroad for studies at any cost'. For Beti's parents, Durrës, a bigger, coastal, central city, offered more opportunities for a migration abroad compared to the native city of Dibër.

Second, parents also have a central role in facilitating the migration project through financial support, mostly but not limited to covering the costs of moving. Not all student migrants receive scholarships, and in many cases, their parents' savings finance their studies, at least for a certain period to get them settled. This may be seen in what Egesta says:

My parents gave me some money for the first months, some of their savings. ... I had no scholarship because I registered individually, not within any scholarship programme.

Beti also credits her family's financial support during her first year of study for supplementing the partial scholarship she received from the Italian government. Similarly, Fiona recounts that her gave her financial aid on top of a partial scholarship from Romanian government programmes. Artemisa also says that her parents helped her financially during her first months in Germany until she found a job and could provide for her own financial needs. Similarly, in research on Chinese student migration, Kajanus (2014) emphasises how parents often use their life savings to finance their daughters' education.

Thirdly, as in Chapter 5, the family acts as a shield protecting daughter migrating alone from family and community gossip. Egesta describes this role when discussing the support her family gave her to migrate abroad:

Another problem was that back in 1995, few girls, especially from small cities, were leaving the country alone. I can imagine some possibly embarrassing moments for my parents. I mean it has been a difficult situation for them in many ways. That is why I consider this a great sacrifice by my family. ... They have had to endure some gossips from the neighbours and also from the family, the usual things you know: how could you send your daughter alone? She will be doing what she wants now, etc.

Once again, her parents' role is manifold. They emotionally motivate and support their daughters to migrate abroad for studies and help them escape social pressure in their place of origin.

A fourth type of parental support emerges in the case of Elida, who had to leave her husband and daughter in Tirana to move to Italy for a three-year PhD programme. As mentioned, Elida says that she migrated to find a better-paid job upon return to Albania. She explains:

I had already discussed this with Genti (Elida's husband). ... But we had to find a solution for our daughter as it would be too much for Genti to take care of during all this time alone. I asked my parents to move to Tirana, as at that moment, my father was retired, and my mother unemployed. So, they could take

care of the daughter and the house. ... My father was mostly doing the groceries shopping. That had also been his specialty back in Diber [laughs].

The decision to migrate abroad for studies made here depends upon the transference of Elida's caregiver role not to her husband but to her parents, particularly, to the child's grandmother. This case shows another configuration of the parents' role and family solidarity to support a daughter's migration by assuming her caregiver role. Amid 'resistance to sharing care at home' (Hochschild 2000, 141) between husband and wife, support from Elida's parents allowed her to migrate. In most cases, this transference of the caregiver role to grandparents enables mothers to migrate, as observed by Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (1997) and Olwig (1999). Grandparents' (mostly grandmothers') care for grandchildren facilitates migration not only by single mothers but also married ones, such as Elida. Parents free their daughters from their caregiver role so that they can migrate, as found by other research among highly educated Turkish and Chinese migrants (Erel 2009, Kajanus 2014). The case of Elida also reveals that student migrants are not only students but also daughters and wives. Their decisions and negotiations about their migration project, therefore, reflect these other roles, as highlighted also by King and Raghuram (2013) and Oluwaseun (2016).

Parents' role appears to be quite crucial for the migration of these young women. However, social network support is not limited only at parents but also extends to friends, relatives and other acquaintances and is visible throughout the various phases of the migration project, as next elaborated. Parents do not physically accompany their daughters on the move to the destination countries (as in the case of the young women moving to Tirana in Chapter 5), but kinship and friendship networks substitute for the parent, taking charge of these student migrants' reception in their initial period abroad.

7.1.3 Organising one's migration: relying on social network's support

Boyd (1989) states that in many cases, the destination country is chosen based on the availability of social networks. That holds true for most of the women discussed in this chapter, as Artemisa illustrates:

I left Albania in 2000 for Germany. I had finished my high school studies in Vlore and was applying to study in Italy. It was by chance that a cousin of ours who had migrated to Germany at the beginning of the 1990s told us that he could help me go to Germany instead of Italy. ... He found all the necessary

information on how to register for a language course and then at the university, and everything... It made everything easier than going somewhere else.

Fiona and Egesta also stress the significance of social networks in the country of destination. Egesta explicitly states *'I went to Italy as the cousins I had there helped me with the documents at the university'*. Fiona says that she went to Romania first as her family had some relatives there, and they helped her tackle the preliminary bureaucracy issues. Vullnetari (2007) describes Albanian migration as a chain migration in which people migrate to regions and countries where they have relatives or friendship networks. These cases further illustrate this pattern of the Albanian migration: female student migrants often follow a chain migration pattern moving to countries where they already have social networks, whether relatives or friends.

Elida, too, says she chose Italy as she had some relatives there who could assist her. However, she adds:

Italy was the best option as it is so close to Albania, I could easily fly home if needed. I am not sure I could have born it to be far from Albania, you know. Your mind mostly stays at home, at my daughter, so being in Italy would be more bearable.

Elida is the only woman to mention the close proximity of her family in Albania as a criterion for her destination of migration. The other women in this chapter do not report similar reasons. Elida's prioritisation of proximity appears to be related to her role as mother and caregiver. Her choice fits what Morokvasic (2003) and Dahinden (2010) claim about the circular migration by central and eastern European women: they choose to migrate to nearby countries to not be very distant from their families, to return home more easily and to better combine their mothering and their productive roles.

In the other cases, the destination depends on the availability of scholarships, along with the availability of social networks. Monika tells that the Italian government granted her a partial scholarship after she applied with the support of a friend already living in Italy as a student migrant. Lindita is the only woman who says that she migrated to Sweden as she was accepted to a master's of business administration programme and granted a full scholarship there.

Aid from social networks extends from the preparation of documents and sharing of preliminary practical information to the provision of accommodations early in migration. In some cases, friends and relatives secure housing for the women. Monika shared a room with a friend who went to Italy two years earlier. Likewise, Elida, Fiona and Egesta tell that at first, their relatives

hosted them. Again, similar to Chapter 5, the roles of parents and social networks in these women's migration processes illustrate how moving on one's own is a quite complex process involving a wide range of actors.

7.2 Transition phase—life abroad

In this section, I focus on the early phases of adjustment to the destination cities and the main patterns that emerge. Again, social networks play a significant, visible role in how the women cope with the new everyday practices and social relations and the new divisions of space and time in the destination cities and achieve a smooth adjustment (Boyd 1989; Shu and Hawthorne 1995, Çaro 2011) in the new, unknown cities. I use Çaro's (2011, 82) definition of adjustment as a process by which 'individuals attempt to pursue their goals, satisfy their needs and respond to cultural differences in a new environment'. In this regard, Fiona and Egesta tell that their cousins helped them to get to know the new cities and their organisations, main streets and corners and other characteristics. All women mentioned in this chapter migrated abroad to big European cities, some during the 1990s and early 2000s. The organisation of life in their cities of origin and sometimes even in Tirana was quite different, particularly as it concerns infrastructure, transportation, social relations, communication styles, the organisation of time and space and the functioning of institutions. Let me reiterate that those who migrated directly from their cities of origin were used to spending their lives within very limited spaces, such as school and home, and to being accompanied by parents or other family members most of the time. Thus, many of these young women faced new everyday practices from tiny matters, such as buying a metro ticket, to new communication patterns and new gendered divisions of space and time. The young women were not confined to home and school, for example, and no longer had to behave as expected in their hometowns.

In the next two sections, I expand on two elements of what Egesta calls the 'new world' means for most of these women: the relations of anonymity that prevails in the 'big city' and the new gendered division of space and time.

7.2.1 Facing anonymity

In the following excerpt, Beti expresses how she struggled with the new minutiae of everyday life. She also highlights shame as a feature of the dominant culture, especially in small cities in Albania, used to control others (as also identified by Mai and Paladini 2013). The feeling of 'shame' mentioned by Beti may be explained by this culture of control that often leads to self-

censure. Nixon (2009) analyses how shame in Albania works as a tool for social control. During communism, shame served as a tool for social control of both genders, but since 1991, it has been applied more to women's behaviour (Nixon 2009). One's behaviour seems to be controlled by an inner eye that projects the judgment of the community.

Beti: The first year in Italy was quite difficult, but after some time, you got used to life there. It was more difficult when it came to some tiny, stupid things. I didn't know how to use various automatic machines for cards or train tickets, all these stupid things that I was not used to. And I was so ashamed/ I was ashamed because I was thinking that everybody was looking at me, but nobody was looking at me. ... I was used to my neighbourhood where people were checking on you: 'What is she doing? How is she doing? Who's she talking to'?

Similarly, Fiona states:

In the beginning, I was embarrassed to walk alone or go to the park to read a book by myself as I watched the others do. But later I got used to this as I understood that nobody was judging me there.

These quotations show that it is not easy to go from the provincial city in Albania, with very few afterschool activities but strong community control of what may be called tradition, to a big European city, with spaces completely unknown to these student migrants. They become familiar with new social relations, with anonymity that replaces the constant social control in their hometowns, with new technologies and urban facilities and with different bodily representations. In this context, Fiona recounts, while laughing, that within a short period of time, she went '*from the normal young girl from Kukes with long hair to a punk, short-haired, young girl in Bucharest*'. Not only do the young women have a new relation with their bodies, but in the cities of destination, they also faced with new gender organisations of time and space, as it is elaborated in the next section.

To end this section, I turn to the cases of Monika and Lindita. They report fewer difficulties regarding independent living and new everyday practices than the other women. They had already taken a step in the process of migration by moving internally from their cities of origin to Tirana. There, they lived on their own, so migration abroad was a continuation of their independent life. It appears that they had already acquired some mobility capital (Dahinden 2010). Mobility capital assists not only possibilities to migrate but also to gain experience in how to adapt to the new social realities of migration. By migrating to Tirana on their own, Monika and Lindita had already faced anonymity, new everyday practices and new gender divisions of space and time.

7.2.2 *A new gender division of space and time*

Before migration, most of the interviewed women cut their daytime and space in half between school and home. Once abroad, many discover a continuum between home, school and work. Beti says:

Another very difficult thing at the beginning was how to organise the day as I was used to getting home very early. [In Albania], after school, I went back home, had lunch, and then did some work in the house and studying. But the afternoon was mainly in the house, and very rarely did I go out alone. [...] In Italy, I had an entirely different experience. We had classes late in the afternoon, people were inviting me to go out for a drink in the evening, and things like this. ... These were all new things for me at the beginning.

New spaces different from their cities of origin are open to them. Similarly, Egesta says that at the beginning, she was scared at the idea of having classes late in the afternoon as she did not know *'how to organise and what to do during the free hours in the morning'*. It also took her a certain time to get to know the city as she was scared to walk alone *'in such a big city'*. She adds:

In Lezhe, the only thing I was doing alone was buying bread next to our building. Now imagine me having to walk alone for more than half an hour, sometimes during the evening. ... The beginning was very difficult.

She adds that initially, she spent a lot of time at home, but after a while, it served only as a place to sleep, and she spent her day at school, work and other activities with friends.

As the students appropriate new spaces outside their cities of origin, they also get to know the new gendered organisations of space. Monika illustrates this:

It was helpful knowing the safe places where to go. ... You know, some streets are dodgy, not very suitable for women to walk, especially during the night-time, so I was careful not to go nearby these areas that I was told about by my friends.

The cities of destination themselves have their own gendered divisions of space and time that may differ from the students' hometowns and represent new configurations where space and time are not necessarily without constraints for women, as mentioned in the previous excerpt. Women

should avoid some areas of the city during the evening, for instance, for fear of certain risks, such as sexual attacks (Rose 1993).

The interviews illustrate the entanglement of gender with the organisation of space and time. As Massey (1994, 186) states, 'the gendering of space and place both reflects and has effects back on the ways in which gender is constructed and understood in the societies in which we live'. The interviewed women come from post-communist Albania where the gendered configuration of space and time transformed after the communist period. After communism, public spaces in cities became more dangerous for women and girls, and a more traditional gender division of time and labour re-emerged. (In the immediate post-communist period, women and girls were mostly confined to the domestic space and work.) The gendered division of space is common across many societies but also differs geographically and historically (McDowell 1983). The women discussed in this chapter move from a specific gender division of time and space to new such configurations that, in turn, influence their construction and understanding of femininity. Despite the difficulties that such changes may entail initially, as Egesta mentions, they appropriate new organisations of space and time, distinct from those at their hometown, affecting, for instance, streets, parks, bars, late-night hours and even bodily representations.

Elida's case presents another example of how gender shapes space and time. She tells that at first in her stay abroad, she experienced very hard moments due to the distance from her daughter and the sense of *'being a bad mother'*. Elida often declined invitations to social activities, such as dinners and other gatherings, as she felt guilty over leaving her daughter and husband in Tirana. She says, *'I was just going to the classes and after that back home'*. She apparently organised her time and space according to maternal guilt by distancing herself from the activities in the destination city. The experience of 'transnational mothering' may be painful due to feelings of guilt. As Erel (2009, 126) emphasises in the case of Turkish migrant women, 'mothers may also find it difficult to reconcile transnational motherhood with their own ideals of good mothering'. Elida says that this feeling of guilt and anxiety about her family negatively influenced her outcomes during the first year, but afterwards, she *'made up her mind to continue and succeed'*.

Given the aim of this analysis to examine these migrant women's experiences after their migration to Tirana, I focus less on the other phases of their migration. As in Chapter 6, for this group, too, I attempt to reveal significant features of their migration abroad, and the adjustment process during their earlier migration phases appears to be such a feature. That process of adjustment entails making a new home (Ahmed 1999) in new social realities. After their return to Albania that, for most, also means a new move to Tirana, they undergo the processes of adjustment and home making again, as analysed in the next section.

7.3 Tirana as a ‘middle way’

This section explores the main patterns of the return experience for these women who moved to Tirana for various reasons. This section focuses on their reasons for return and their methods for coping with the adjustment process in Tirana in their social networks and the labour market. As in Chapter 6, return migration also entails a new move, making it difficult to speak in terms of a strict return. I start by analysing their reasons for returning to Albania and for moving to Tirana instead of their hometowns. I then trace the main patterns of their adjustment to Tirana, which is a new settlement for most.

7.3.1 Reasons for returning

As in the previous chapter, it is quite hard to clearly delineate the motivations for return to Tirana as they often overlap or are due to factors related to both Albania and the destination country. Furthermore, the motivations for returning to Albania are, for some, intermingled with their reasons to return not to their hometowns but to Tirana. First, a distinction, albeit not entirely clear, could be made among those migrants unwilling to return and those planning to return. Only Elida and Lindita left Albania with clear, voluntary plans to return from the beginning of their migration. Elida moved to Italy for doctoral studies while her family (husband and daughter) stayed in Tirana, and she had no plans to stay in Italy after graduation. Lindita received her scholarship on the condition that she return to Albania after studying for two years, and she complied with the restriction.

The other women returned to Albania for various reasons, some unexpected. Family reasons are most prevalent. As Egesta tells, she returned as her father became ill:

I didn't want to return to Albania. After so many years in Italy, I had no plans to return. But my father had some health issues, and I decided to come back for a few years, and here I am still here. I came back in 2005 after ten years [of migration]. I didn't want to return as I had nothing, except my family, to attract me here. ... But I had to, for my father who was ill and for my family so that I could support them.

In this particular case, Egesta had to return to Albania. Although her sister lived in Albania, as Egesta says, her sister was married and lived with her husband's family in Vlore, so she could not be of constant help, physical or financial, to their parents. Thus, gender and the household gender

structure influenced her return. Care is considered to be the responsibility of women, in this case, the single daughter. Artemisa, too, returned from Germany in 2008 after eight years when her mother suffered a long neurosis after her younger sister's death in a car accident. To be near her mother and father, Artemisa decided to stay to Tirana for a while:

I didn't plan my return. The accident just happened, and I came back as soon as possible. ... My mother was not recovering from the stress and the pain, so I thought it would be better to stay a little bit longer with her. Maybe a change would help her recover soon. ... I decided to stay some time in Albania in order to be closer to my parents. They still live in Vlore as they have all their life there, but being in Tirana allows me to meet them almost every weekend. ... I go there or they come to Tirana.

Egesta and Artemisa had already obtained legal residency permits in Italy and Germany and could easily return to their home countries or move to another country. Possession of a residency card in a foreign country facilitates the decision to return to Albania and gives a sense of comfort and flexibility if the women envisage migrating again. According to Mai and Paladini (2013, 50), having the legal status in Italy or another country remains a priority for Albanian migrants and constitutes a safety valve, as stated in Chapter 6. In the case of Egesta and Artemisa, their Italian and German residency cards provided an additional resource allowing them to easily return to Albania and leave again.

That brings us to the second reason for return, the lack of residency cards or passports in the destination country. Difficulties obtaining residency permits and visas are also highlighted as a significant reason for returning to Albania by Zenelaga and Sotirofski (2011) and Trimçev, Dakli and Ymeri (2005) in research on student migrants returning to Albania. Some of the interviewed women cite the impossibility of regularising their stay in their country of destination after completing their studies as their primary reason for returning.

Fiona: I returned because of the residence permit in the UK. ... I couldn't arrange the documents for work, and I could not register for doctoral studies as it was very expensive. I could have found some other ways, such as marrying, for example, finding someone and marry him in order to stay. But I was not ready for this, to be honest. I know that many do this, but I could not, it was like stepping on my dignity. This may sound completely stupid, but I couldn't manage.

Fiona's return story points to a combination of structural constraints, individual agency and the difficulty of getting a residency permit in the choice to return and preserve her 'dignity'. Beti and

Monika also report the structural constraint of the work permit as a reason for returning to Albania. Beti says that after failing to arrange a work permit in Italy, she left for France but still had difficulties switching from a student to a work permit, so she *'thought it to best return in Albania for some time'*. We see here how the impossibility of complying with residency permit regimes drives circular migration, or moving among various countries, as defined by Triandafyllidou (2013). Moving from a student permit to a work permit is a process strongly related to the labour market structure in the destination country.

Unwillingness to work in a 'whatever job' in the country of destination is a third reason for returning to Albania, as Monika illustrates:

It was very difficult to find an appropriate job that would count towards a work permit, and I didn't want to work in whatever job only to stay there. That is why I decided to come back as I thought that I could find a better job in Tirana, more appropriate for my education. ... If I had the possibility to obtain an adequate job in Bologna and get a work permit, I would have stayed, for sure. ... My roommate stayed in Italy. She is from Fier too, but she absolutely didn't want to return in Albania. We both completed bachelor's and master's studies in Bologna. ... I returned. She found a job in a travel agency, nothing to do with political economy and master studies. But she didn't want to come back, and this was the way to stay there as she applied for a work permit.

Challenges finding appropriate jobs in destination countries are also reported by Mai and Paladini (2013), who describe the marginalisation of Albanian migrants (economic and students) in Italy and their dilemma of whether to stay in Italy or return to Albania and try their luck in finding jobs in their professions. Difficulties obtaining employment in one's field of work also appear in other research (Zenelaga and Sotirofski 2011; Trimçev, Dakli and Ymeri 2005). Reasons for return thus are related to structural constraints, such as the absence of the regular residency permits and the structure of the labour market in the destination country(ies). As stated by Cassarino (2004), the decision-making process leading refugees to return is explained not only by individual factors but also by broader social and economic contexts influenced by the situations faced in the host or home country. Similarly to the cases presented here, Sondhi and King (2017) show that female Indian international migrants return due to visa expiry after completion of studies, the desire or obligation to stay close to their parents and the better job prospects in their home countries. The difficulty of clearly defining the return as voluntary or involuntary arises here, too.

7.3.2 Choosing Tirana as a space in the middle

The women in this chapter all settled in Tirana. Three moved internally to Tirana first and then migrated abroad for studies, while the others migrated abroad first and then decided to move to Tirana upon their return. In this section, I focus on the women who moved to Tirana after returning from abroad and on their reasons for not returning to their hometown.

First, Tirana appears to offer more opportunities for finding jobs related to their education and experience.

Egesta: I live in Tirana and go very often to Lezbe. It's less than one-hour trip now. [...] I didn't think to live in Lezbe when I returned as I could not find a job related to my education. Indeed, I returned as my father was ill, but staying unemployed in Lezbe would not help him much. I needed to continue working to be more useful for them all [Egesta's family].

Egesta prefers returning Tirana over her place of origin due to the greater number of economic opportunities in the capital. Although she returned for family reasons, she desires to live in Tirana and take care of her family at the same time. Doing this has become possible thanks to the improvement of infrastructure in Albania, which has shortened the time it takes to travel distances²⁹. Thus, traveling and visiting one's family is easier. Artemisa tells a similar story. She goes very often to Vlore to stay with her parents, and they also come to Tirana more frequently than before her return.

I had no idea where to work in Vlore. Tirana seemed a little different, a growing city and with a lot of international and private institutions. Nowadays, it's not such a great distance, less than two hours by car, so I can easily go there if they need me, and I normally go at least two weekends per month, and my parents visit often as well. It is good for them too to come to Tirana and have some distraction.

Economic and better job opportunities are the first reason why returnees choose Tirana instead of their hometowns.

Secondly, for those whose first migration abroad was also an escape from the social control and the mentality in their cities of origin, Tirana represents a big city that may be still considered an

²⁹ The road infrastructure has been visibly improved since the early 2010s. For example, while it once took six hours to go from Tirana to Kukes, it now takes only one and a half hours.

escape from their cities of origin. These migrants move to Tirana in an attempt to continue the lifestyle they nurtured abroad, living on their own away from their communities of origin.

Fiona: I returned and decided to live in Tirana, as a middle way. Going back to Kukes was absolutely out of the question. I go there very often... but I could not live there. The pressure of the small city is absolutely unbearable. ... I could not go and live with my family after eight years of living alone. It is so difficult to go back to the expression, 'Where are you going'? 'You are coming home late', etc.

Artemisa: But I never thought to stay in Vlore, first of all as I could not get back to that way of living, a very provincial city where everybody controls everybody else, very aggressive men, with no respect for women at all, insecurity in the streets, a lot of these things.

Although they have not lived previously in Tirana, they imagine it as a big city, with a different lifestyle from their hometowns and somehow similar to the cities where they lived abroad.

Fiona: Tirana appeared to be a more opened city compared to Kukes, with more job opportunities, and people returning from abroad ... more cultural life, more activities. ... I've had not so much contact with people in Tirana. ... it's not that I'd visited Tirana so much previously. ... I was not planning to return, so that's why.

Again, as analysed in Chapter 5, Fiona's quotation shows that geographical gendered imaginaries shape migration projects, illustrating Riano's (2015, 45) descriptions of the role of gender aspirations and geographical imaginations in migratory projects. Imaginaries about Tirana as a place of opportunities and freedom, with less social control through gender norms, inform the women's project to return to Tirana. The capital shines in the imaginary of continuing the life the women had abroad. For instance, Artemisa says that to her eyes, Tirana appears as a place where she can continue to live on her own, with '*no unbearable gossiping around*'.

A process of estrangement from their hometowns may be noticed in these cases. Sara Ahmed (1999, 343) argues that, "the past" becomes associated with a home that it is impossible to inhabit, and be inhabited by, in the present. ... Migration can hence be considered as a process of estrangement, a process of becoming estranged from that which was inhabited as home'. By staying in Tirana, these young women find a middle way between their previous homes, their hometowns, and the homes they made during international migration. Living in Tirana helps them preserve the independence they gained abroad and secure good jobs but also maintain a relationship with their

hometowns and care for the parents. Gender informs their practices as it becomes manifest in their frequent visits to their cities of origin to look after their parents. Moreover, gender informs the women's choice of Tirana over their hometowns that are viewed as less free regarding gender expectations and relations and as sites of stronger social control—places to which they have become estranged.

7.3.3 Tirana: between 'estrangement' and 'home making'

Most of the migrant women discussed in this chapter lived abroad for longer than four years and did not visit Albania regularly. Elida is the only one who travelled to Albania a couple times a year as her family (daughter and husband) stayed in Tirana. The financial costs of frequent travel to Albania from the UK or Germany also pose an issue, but most importantly, most of the women left with no clear plans to return to Albania. Returning to Tirana after several years or moving to Tirana upon their return entails a new process of adjustment to the city in finding housing and job and learning everyday practices. Nevertheless, their interviews show that the migrants do not return as blank slates but engage in certain (varying) amounts of preparation. This supports Cassarino's (2004) argument that the return migrant mobilises various ways to prepare for return. As mentioned, the return, particularly for these women not only returning to Albania but also moving to a new settlement, requires a process of adjustment to a new place (Ley and Kobayashi 2009) that is often anticipated through previous transnational relations with people in the home country. Let us explore in detail some patterns of this new adjustment process.

First, mobilising existing social relations is one of the most important elements in the process of returning and adjusting to Tirana. As seen, friendship relations play a larger role than family relations here. Monika recalls that while in Italy, she maintained her friendship contacts in Tirana and '*knew a little bit what I was to expect back to Tirana*'. Dahinden (2010a) argues that often migrants maintain transnational relations that are highly relevant after return. These transnational networks might not be very strong but are mobilised after return to cope with the adjustment process. Artemisa tells that some of her friends from Vlora have moved to Tirana:

I have had not so many contacts with my old friends in Vlora, but with two or -three of them, I kept more in touch/ ... They had moved to Tirana ... It was good to know some people here [in Tirana], especially at the beginning after you return from many years abroad. ... She [an old friend from her hometown now living in Tirana] helped me a lot to find an apartment. ... You have someone with whom to have lunch sometime or get invited to her place.

Additionally, Beti says that she had only few friends left in Albania and only one living in Tirana, but that friend's help was crucial upon her double return.

When I came back from France, I was a little bit depressed. I came to Tirana and was living at a friend's house. I wanted to start immediately searching for a job, ... but I was completely shocked by the chaos in Tirana. ... Here, everything was being done through friends and acquaintances. I almost went crazy. But this friend of mine helped me a lot to adapt a little bit.

Beti's friend acquaints her with where the locals go to have coffee or attend cultural events. The use of networks, friendship networks in this case, is crucial for everyday life and for finding employment (as it is developed in the next section). It, therefore, is useful to understand how these social networks are built.

Here, we come to the second point of this section: the complex knitting of new social networks. Most of these women seek relationships to international students returning from abroad who followed similar pathways. The ways the women build their social networks seem to follow a homophilic principle, both status and value homophily (Dahinden 2010a). In status homophily, similarity 'comprises the large, socio-demographic dimensions, which stratify society: i.e. attributed or acquired characteristics like ethnicity, gender, age, religion, education or occupation' (Dahinden 2010a, 128). Status homophily can be seen in the case of female, educated, returned migrants who stay more frequently with women than men and with women and men who have similar education pathways and experiences. 'Value homophily, on the other hand, is based on shared values, attitudes and beliefs' (Dahinden 2010a, 128).

Egesta: I have made some friends, mostly women and a few men with similar pathways as me. They have also been abroad, and they have studied abroad and now are back in Tirana to work. It is easier to be with them as we have similar ways of thinking, of organising the day. We feel the same lack of activities here in Tirana.

Similarly, Artemisa says that she has not made many new friends, but the majority are young women, particularly returned, international student migrants. Monika, in contrasts, tells that she has many friends of approximately the same age, young female and male returned migrants who have studied abroad:

I spend a lot of time with them. We share quite the same passions and ideas. ... We struggle a lot to create some new spaces of debate and exchange of ideas. ... A lot of young people are returning from abroad, and sometimes they do not feel at ease in Tirana, and when we are together, it feels better.

This brings us to a third point in this section: after returning to Tirana, most young women try to maintain their previous habits, for instance, going to a particular cafeteria which reminds them of their life abroad:

Beti: I used to go every weekend to the French bakery here in Tirana to establish a routine that I had in France. It's not the same, I know, but just to do something I loved to do there and I was missing here a lot.

Similarly, Fiona goes to a coffee shop and art space established by a friend who is also a return migrant. Fiona says that this coffee shop makes her feel like home, reminding her of the places she went while abroad. Thus, the return from abroad involves adjustment processes that do not demand detachment or abandonment of the previous migratory experience (Cassarino 2004). The interviewees go to bookshops, cafés and cultural centres where they follow particular routines, meet with other people similar to them and keep up with certain cultural activities. This behaviour may explain the creation of new communities in Tirana that consist mostly of young people returning from abroad who try to engage in cultural and social activities and create alternative spaces to those that managed by the state or are simply missing. Furthermore, these gatherings of young women and men returning from migratory experiences can be analysed through the process of estrangement and home making (Ahmed 1999). The young people may form these new communities 'through the shared experience of not being fully at home' (Ahmed 1999, 345).

In the fourth point, adjustment and home making in Tirana involve both old and new Albanian networks and the social networks made during migration. The web of social networks is quite complex and include foreign networks. Women in this group maintain their social contacts and relations abroad after their return to Tirana. For Egesta and Artemisa, keeping in touch with their previous social relations is quite easy as they both have long-term residency permits in Italy and Germany, respectively, which serve as a mobility resource allowing them to visit their destination countries and maintain their contacts. However, new technologies, such as the Internet and, more recently, social media, also facilitate these transnational relationships. For instance, Fiona and Monika tell that they talk regularly with their friends (in the UK and Italy) through various types of online chat programmes. Fiona says:

It is good to talk with them [friends in the UK] often. ... We talk about social activities they have there, anything new and interesting I make here—movies, books, conferences, articles. I mean, things that we talked about there, now we talk through Google Talk or Facebook. ... It's virtual, but nevertheless, it's good, it's comfortable. ... I think I would go crazy without this continuation of friendship with them. ... Can you imagine, starting a new life from scratch, like a tabula rasa? That would be awful.

In Fiona's case, previous social networks serve to mitigate the adjustment process upon return. Again, as highlighted by Cassarino (2014), the return process is not merely a turning page but also includes the maintenance of some previous habits and social networks. Additionally, Elida often talks to friends she made in Italy:

I keep in touch with some of my colleagues from my PhD programme. ... We share information about our work, about conferences, or books and articles that could help us in our work. ... Information about conferences or workshops abroad is the most valuable as they have more connections than me here in Tirana, so that helps me a lot to keep these contacts.

In this case, relationships with previous social contacts are continued in the context of professional life. Black and King (2004) state that returnees need to maintain their access to the wider international professional and social world in which they have worked and lived, and this need creates a motivation to maintain the transnational linkages with their social networks abroad.

7.3.4 Marriage patterns

The interviewees also take into account marriage status in the process of knitting new social networks in Tirana. Dahinden (2010a) says, 'cultural representation can seemingly have an effect on network structures through the gender roles', and this seems to be confirmed in the case of the single female student migrant returning to Albania. The interviewees display a tendency to forge new relations with similar people so that they can continue their previous lifestyle or advance in their career. Consequently, few married people are part of these relations, as the interviewees state. For example, Fiona says that most of her close friends have returned from abroad, and most are unmarried. *'It is not so easy to keep up with my married friends. I see them less and less'*, she adds. In the same vein, Beti says:

Most of my old friends are married, and we don't meet so often. They have other interests. ... It's strange how getting married and having a baby seems to change your life. ... They have like other things to talk about, and they stay more with each other ... married friends with married friends and their children. ... We're always friends but not so close like before. They make new married friends. I make new single friends. ... It's like this expression: 'life drove us apart' ... Yes, it's just like this expression.

This raises the question of these women's marriage plans. All the single interviewed women refuse to make any marriage plans. The primary reason appears to be related to career advancement. Beti says:

I attend every activity organised at the university, in other institutions, for conferences, cultural gatherings, everything that can help me to be in constant movement, to get to know and keep contact with people that work in similar fields that me or have similar interests. It keeps me connected, and it is like this that one may advance here. ... Could I do this if I were married? I have so much doubt about this because of all the house duties and care and the conflicts this could bring within the couple.

Here, participation in activities outside the official job duties is viewed as more appropriate for women free of family responsibilities. Hochschild (2000, 141) explains that most career advancement is based on a well-known pattern—competing with fellow professionals, getting credit for work, building a reputation—and that seems more suited for men with no engagement in reproductive work. Accordingly, Fiona says:

Not that I have anything particular against marriage, but it looks to me that here in Albania, once you are married, you don't have much time for other things but housework and your job. I hear my colleagues at work complaining that their husbands do not help, they are running all the time around, shopping, taking children to school, asking permission at work to go to stay in line to pay bills, and a lot of this stuff. It's very difficult for them to be part of other activities other than during the official job schedule. ... This is not how I'd like to live, to be frank.

The participants' ideas about marriage and family formation are affected by the gendered configuration of roles in which the woman is seen as the only caregiver and the man as the only breadwinner. These expectations hold true for those women who are the breadwinners, too, and face the double burden of family and paid work. According to the most recent Time Use Survey in Albania (INSTAT 2011), employed women have the longest working day (i.e. total work), the

shortest free time and the least time for personal activities. Marriage appears thus to be a hindrance to career advancement projects. Lindita, too, reiterates this; she has to focus on her career first. She adds that she has still many goals to achieve in her career, and marrying would ‘just be an obstacle’ because she would not have time to invest in her career. Similar accounts are found in the research on Chinese, Japanese and Korean highly educated women, whose choices to postpone marriage are influenced by the conflicting burden of caring roles and the seeming implausibility of combining paid work and domestic labour (Kim 2012).

Preserving one’s lifestyle and independence seem to present a second reason for postponing marriage, as explored in Chapter 5. Egesta illustrates the need for independence:

No marriage for the moment. I am not sure I can find somebody willing to adapt to my way of life and my independence. It’s been so many years I am living alone that it looks so complicated to have a relationship now. I’ve had some relationships, very temporary, nothing stable or serious.

Beti also emphasised: ‘*I come back home late in the evening. I try to continue my previous lifestyle*’. Monika and Lindita narrate similar stories. Lindita says that she has no upcoming plans for marriage as she is also planning to migrate again, and marriage could be an obstacle in this context.

That brings us to a third reason highlighted in some interviews: marriage plans could hinder migration plans. In this context, Fiona says she is investing much of her energy to leaving, and marrying in Albania would erase all these efforts; therefore, she does not envisage making any marriage in Albania. Gender appears to affect migration in this case, too: being married is perceived as a loss of freedom that would hinder a remigration project. Kajanus (2014) describes somewhat similar and different situation among Chinese female, highly educated return migrants. Their main objectives appear to be marriage, together with education and career (Kajanus (2014). However, investing in post-graduate education encourages the postponement of marriage among return migrants in China (Kajanus 2014). In Albania, too, the age at marriage varies by education level, with those with higher levels of education getting married at the oldest ages³⁰. Furthermore, in the case of highly educated Chinese return migrants, childbearing does not enter into their objectives. Kajanus (2014) reveals that Chinese highly educated female migrants see the mothering role as an obstacle to their career advancement and lifestyle. These cases share a common context of constructed gender roles which the international student migrants challenge.

³⁰ According to Census 2011 data and to personal communications with INSTAT representatives about data from 2008, 2009 and 2010 (April 2015).

A final point in this section is that no women in this group report negotiations with parents over postponing marriage, unlike what we saw in Chapter 5. This difference may be related to the long time these young women have been abroad living alone and to their increased independence and self-confidence. Indeed, they report that their relationship to the families has changed. As well, living on their own for a certain period has changed their relations with their families. Growing older far from their families and facing various constraints, everyday and structural (e.g. papers regularisation and labour market integration) have influenced their relations with their families. As Beti says:

You could notice the difference when I was coming back for holidays. ... There was this difference, as we were equal now, as I had my house abroad, and we were exchanging experiences more as friends than parents and daughter.

Similarly, Egesta tells about a change of her position within her family. With the passing of time, especially after she started to work in addition to studying, her father started to call her and share with her worries about various family issues. Fiona says that her relation with her father became quite close after she left Romania for the UK:

I could contradict him [Fiona's father] and argue with him, which previously was quite unimaginable. I guess this was because of the age, but mostly because of the fact that I had succeeded something important in his eyes by moving to UK without their help [laughs].

A similar, positive change of the daughter's position in the family upon return from studies abroad can be observed in the story of Ghosh (Ghosh and Wang 2003) after her return to India from studies in Canada. The experience of studying abroad positively affects the "social location" (Sondhi and King 2013) of these young women within the family structure. Their increased independence and self-confidence, followed by less family interference, may also explain the lack of talks and discussion about marriage plans with their families, as it was the case with young female students migrating internally.

7.3.5 Employment in Tirana

As mentioned, female, educated return migrants live in Tirana among others similar to them due to the opportunities for employment appropriate to their education. It is their relation to the

labour market and career advancement that I present in this subsection. First, the interviews demonstrate the importance of family and friendship networks and the lack of institutional support in finding jobs. None of the interviewed women have any knowledge of governmental programmes for return migrants, and they report a lack of trust in the role of employment agencies. Four heard of the Brain Gain programme³¹, but none has ever applied to benefit from it.

The informal ways of job searching and the lack of trust in the institutional channels are illustrated by Fiona:

One has no idea how to find a job, and there are no announcements, no employment agencies, nothing. The announcements in the newspapers they are just for complying with the official rule because apparently, the jobs have already been assigned to people. ... I knew nobody. I spent about six months just going around, completely lost and also disappointed. I started to look for ways to leave again as I was having absolutely no hope here. And I graduated with very high grades for my MA. Apparently, if you do not have the right connections, nobody cares for your diploma. Then, completely by chance, I met somebody who needed a consultant for a two-year project.

Interestingly, in this excerpt, Fiona claims that Albania has ‘no employment agencies’. Indeed, each of the country’s twelve prefectures has employment agencies³², but job seekers rarely resort to them as these agencies focus more on low-skilled employment (Wittberger et al. 2012; Danaj 2014). The role of social relations is also highlighted by Beti: ‘Here everything was being done through friends and acquaintances’. In the same context, Elida says that one of her former colleagues recommended her to a private university looking for staff with doctoral degrees. The interviewees reveal that finding a job generally occurs through social relations (mostly friendship networks). Egesta, too, says that she found her first job through acquaintances of her friends. She adds that she later found complementary, part-time employment through friends she made at her main job.

The women in this chapter work as public and private university lecturers and for NGOs and private television stations. Apparently, these sectors have the greatest attraction for international student returnees. Mai and Paladini (2013, 52) also emphasise that the well-educated returnees from

³¹ The Brain Gain programme was implemented by the Albanian government from 2006 to 2012, with the aim to reverse brain drain through the return of qualified migrants (for more information on the Brain Gain programme, see Pavlov (2013, 9-52). The Brain Gain officers operated until 30 June 2013, and in total 138 individuals (50 women, 88 men) benefited from the incentive packages. The Brain Gain programme also supported legal and regulatory changes. In June 2015, it was unknown whether the program still operated as the official website was offline.

³² According to the structure of the Ministry of Welfare (formerly the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities), www.sociale.gov.al.

Italy are mainly employed in recently developed sectors in Albania, such as private universities, NGOs, private televisions and the public administration sector.

A second point concerning the participants' employment in Tirana is they stress that career advancement is a significant issue to them. It, therefore, is worth to exploring how they succeed in this area.

Monika: Here, it is like a jungle. There are no rules. Nobody knows what should be done to advance your career, or to keep your job. It's just like a jungle.

Egesta: It is very difficult to advance in your career. I mean, the worst thing is that one day, you may have a high position, surprising even to yourself, and then tomorrow, you are out. And, you know neither why you obtained the fantastic position to start with, nor why you were thrown out.

A lack of gradual steps to career advancement and the absence of specified regulations and competencies regarding job position are among the main issues mentioned in the interviews. Other obstacles include corruption, nepotism and political favouritism in the labour market in Albania, as found in extensive literature (Vullnetari 2012; Trimcev, Dakli and Ymeri 2005; Musaraj 2009; Mai and Paladini 2013). Beti describes the lack of clarity about career advancement:

There is no clear idea how the hell you can advance in your job. Yes, we all know it, that you have to know the right people, but I don't know if there is any other way. ... It's only a question of image.

Beti adds:

You have to be good-looking, present in the media. These are the values to progress in your career. And this is so humiliating. It's humiliating to be appreciated only for this. It's like a violation, which is not physical, but sometimes it is even worse. I had completely forgotten these 'values', and now I have to adapt to this situation. Sometimes I find myself acting like I don't recognise myself. It's terrible.

Here, we come to the third pattern of these women's relation to the labour market as it emerges in their interviews: physical appearance seems to carry much more value than competency. As shown in Beti's quotation, valuing appearance over competency violates her values and beliefs. Furthermore, she experiences an inner conflict as to preserve her job, she might have to behave in a way she does not like. In addition to Beti, Fiona says that she hates that women have to be as

'supermodels when they go to work, so they can be appreciated and have a good career'. Drawing also on some of the interviews belonging to Chapter 5, it can be asserted that women often face escalating sexual objectification. Accordingly, Egesta declares:

I often get pissed off, especially with older men and their offensive comments about your physical appearance and sex-related comments. ... I mean, yes, in Italy too, men are like this, with their comments and stuff, about your legs and breasts, and whatever ... but not so gross and not so persistent and offensive... Then you have to become either arrogant and act like brutally or refuse any contact and keep to yourself. ... The problem is that this disgusting man might be your boss or your boss's friend, so then you don't really know how to behave as you want to keep your job.

Interestingly, Egesta's words give testimony to the existence of sexual offenses both in the home and the destination country. Sexual objectification is not an Albanian-specific problem that these returnee experience only after returning to Tirana. Additionally, and more importantly, Egesta denounces how sexual objectification and sexual offences add to the uncertainty of the job positions.

On a last note, insecurity about keeping their jobs preoccupies all the participants. We have seen that they criticise the lack of regulation regarding career advancement and promotions or even the rules to a job. On one hand, this is related to the features of the Albanian labour market already mentioned, such as corruption, nepotism and informality, instead of institutional functionality. On the other hand, job insecurity can be seen within a broader context that extends beyond Albania: the growing precarity among young, educated people (Simone et al. 2015). Precarity is not specific to the low-skilled workers but affects even the highly skilled, as highlighted by Pierre Bourdieu (1998). As in these above examples, the women in this chapter are all highly educated but in a situation of uncertain and unstable employment.

In the general Albanian context, they have good, well-paying jobs relatively close to their professions or, at least, in line with the Albanian expression 'office jobs' (*pune zyre*). However, the participants all report that they have no trust in the contracts they maintain, and some, particularly Egesta, even doubt whether their social insurance contributions are being paid at all. Likewise, Fiona says that her contract is '*just a piece of paper*' as one of her colleagues who also had a contract was fired within one day. Elida shares that the risk of being fired exists always; therefore, she tries to keep her and her husband's social networks as strong as possible to keep their jobs or possibly find others in case something happens to their current jobs. Most importantly, this uncertainty regarding the participants' jobs and social insurances is also reflected in their dilemmas and projects regarding

leaving Albania again. According to Kopliku (2016), migrants find it very difficult to readjust upon their return in Albania due to their home country's different work climate and culture, and that drives them to consider another migration project.

7.3.6 Return migration as a transitional phase

This section focuses on women's projects to migrate again, showing that for most of them, Tirana is only a phase in their migration project. Similarly, other researchers (Black and King 2004; Ley and Kobayashi 2009; Sondhi 2013; Sondhi and King 2017) see return migration as not a permanent move but as part of a wider, continuing migration process. Everyday informal practices and unstable jobs drive returnees' projects to migrate once again. Similar accounts are highlighted by Sondhi and King (2017) among Indian return international students.

The situation of being in between two countries is another factor in these return migrants' projects of emigration. Egesta, for example, describes how some returnees to Tirana remain in limbo between the life in Tirana to which they have difficulties adapting and their previous practices of life in the destination country.

I don't know how the health insurance system works as anytime that you need to go to the hospital you have to deal with everything individually. ... Yes, it is true that life in Tirana is far more dynamic than in other Albanian cities, but this insecurity that you have, especially when you are alone and live alone, is becoming unbearable. ... What hurts me more is that despite the life that I had built in Italy, I was not feeling at home as my family was in Albania, but here in Tirana, I don't feel at home either. This is a very difficult feeling. Anyway, leaving aside the sentimentalism, I am concretely planning to leave again for Italy as soon as I manage to take my parents with me.

Egesta gives the impression of being caught in a vicious circle. She returned to Tirana as it offers more job opportunities than her hometown and allows her to live on her own. However, her employment situation and the difficulties of living alone push her to plan to remigrate. Here, once again, we also see how gender intersects with migration strategies. The need to care for one's parents influences the decision whether to re-emigrate and, if so, when and how.

Egesta also addresses the matter of feeling at home. Uncertainties of 'being at home' characterise the returnees' experiences in Tirana (i.e. home is considered to be a 'physical location or 'house/apartment, and the set of feelings and ideas expressed in the Albanian language are expressed by the same word *shtëpi*) (Vullnetari 2015, 40). The returnees experience estrangement not only in

relation to their place of origin but throughout their migration experiences. In the words of Egesta, ‘home’ is neither in Italy nor Albania. Fiona, too, reports feeling like a stranger in Tirana:

I am looking to leave again. ... I hope to find a job somewhere else. I've applied for some jobs in Switzerland, and the UK again—that would be great—and Germany too. ... It is very difficult here, I need to work very hard, and at the same time, I have nothing stable. ... I feel like a stranger most of the time. ... It's this feeling like I am here temporarily until I find something better abroad.

Artemisa tells that when she left in 2000, she expected more progress in Albania after eight years. To the contrary, though, she says, the situation looks even worse in some ways. She stresses the feeling of uncertainty that dominates in Tirana, especially regarding employment:

If you lose your job here, you're practically lost. There is nothing there to protect you, no assistance, nothing. ... Tirana is perfect as long as you don't have any problem, as long as you have a job and good money and good health. Otherwise, you're lost.

As well, Lindita, who only stayed in Sweden for two years, is trying to leave again, probably to a Nordic country where, she says, ‘women are in a far better position than in other countries’. As Lindita recounts, the situation of women and men in Sweden and the differences from Albania impressed her. Configurations of gender roles and relations fuel Lindita’s desire to migrate and her choice of preferred destinations. Her experience abroad informs her further plans to re-migrate:

I really hope I will manage to find some opportunity for a PhD programme or even a master's. ... But sometimes I think, uh, I am 28 years old, and I'll have to study again, instead of having a good job and some clarity about the future. This is not a very beautiful picture in fact. But what I can do?! But, you know, I am also thinking about applying to the Canadian lottery³³ as I have heard that it is a good country to live in, a very social one, and maybe it will be easier to find a job and settle.

Again, further education is perceived as a strategy to enable migration in the context of the constraining migration regime for Albanian citizens. A paradoxical situation emerges as women try to fulfil the desire for stability by re-emigrating. Again, the migration project is built on gendered

³³ She refers to the Canadian immigration programme.

geographical imaginaries about social and gender-equal countries, such as highlighted in this research.

7.4 Conclusions—discussing the findings

This chapter analyses the experiences of female international students who migrated on their own and settled in Tirana after returning. Similar to the cases analysed in the previous chapter, it is difficult to speak of a definite return as here, too, women returned to Albania but moved to Tirana instead of their hometowns. Thus, the process of adjustment to Tirana has particular significance for most women as a completely new settlement. In what follows, I start with the overall findings and then emphasise four particular inputs.

On an overall note, I should first note that as previously observed, the decision-making of these international migrant students is not individual but embedded within social relationships, particularly with parents and friends. Similar findings are reported in other research on international student migration (Brooks and Waters 2010, King and Raghuram 2013, Kajanus 2014, Oluwaseun 2016). Again, parental support is not only financial but also motivational, emotional and, moreover, protective in the face of the social pressure these women face in their hometowns. Parents also free their daughters from their caregiver role so that they can migrate, as found in other research on Turkish and Chinese international student migrants (Erel 2009, Kajanus 2014). Like other research (King and Raghuram 2013, Oluwaseun 2016, Kajanus 2014), the cases in this chapter show that female student migrants are not only students but also daughters, wives and mothers, and they must juggle all these roles while making decisions whether to migrate abroad and return to Albania.

Additionally, the women's interviews represent the multiple processes of adjustment and readjustment they experience. Through their cases, migration manifests as a plurality of experiences and histories (as defined by Ahmed et al. 2003). Most of these women are in a constant process of 'uprooting and regrounding home and migration' (Ahmed et al. 2003, 2,10). They adjust to, among other factors, new everyday practices and new gender divisions of space and time in the destination countries and upon return to Albania.

The first particular input of this chapter is related to the motivations triggering the migration process of these international student migrants. The results of the analysis reveal these motivations are both multiple and gendered. Similar to other studies on international student migration (Findlay et al. 2012; King and Ruiz-Gelices 2003; Ichimoto 2004; Kajanus 2014; Oluwaseun 2016), the women migrants are attracted by better educational opportunities, which they hope will lead to better jobs. The saying 'better education means better jobs' is a widespread maxim in Albanian

society, as has become evident in the preceding chapters. The insight that better education does not necessarily lead to better jobs and career advancement has wide-ranging repercussions for the lives of the international student returnees. In many of the cases presented in this chapter, it has forced them to return to Albania or engage in countless cycles of remigration.

The female students' international migration is not only shaped by a desire for better education and job opportunities but also informed by an aim to transgress the accepted borders of femininity in their places of origin. These young women migrate to escape the social pressures over the gender expectations in their hometowns. Matsui (1995) and Ichimoto (2004) give similar accounts of Japanese female international student migrants, who explain that one motivation is to escape from the patriarchal society in Japan.

Education provides another instrument to migrate with proper paperwork and not through illegalised ways, as discussed in the previous chapter 6. Again, as highlighted in Chapter 5, education is a strategy for migration, in this case, for international migration. The women in this chapter illustrate King and Raghuram's (2013) finding that international students are involved in a life migration strategy whose educational objective is part of their life-course desire for long-term migration.

In a second input, it must be noted that one of the gendered patterns of these migrants' return to Albania is observed in their new move to Tirana. They favour Tirana over their hometowns as the capital offers more economic opportunities and enables them to emulate the lifestyle they had abroad: living on their own, away from the social pressures of their communities of origin. This strategy expresses these young women's agency and resistance to the traditional gender roles and expectations dominant in their places of origin. By staying in Tirana, these young women find a middle way between the homes they have made. Gender informs their preference of Tirana over their cities of origin that have stricter gender relations and stronger social control, places to which they have become estranged. This pattern confirms Ghosh's (2000) claim that the initial motivations for migration heavily influence return. In this case, these initial motives are to escape the social pressure in the interviewees' cities of origin. Again, as noted, gendered geographical imaginaries—Tirana as a place with less strict gender expectations and more freedom—inform their choice to not return to their hometowns. Settling in Tirana may be seen as a resistance to giving up to their autonomous way of life and freedom. Sondhi and King (2017) similarly discuss Indian female international students who do not want to return home specifically to avoid losing the sense of freedom they experienced while living abroad. In the case of the women discussed in this chapter, they avoid the loss of freedom by not returning to their hometowns but, instead, moving to a space in the middle.

The third input of this chapter concerns the new social relations created upon the participants' return to Tirana. Their narratives show that they base their new social networks on similarities and include mostly return international students with similar migration experiences. The participants cope with the constraints experienced in Tirana by mobilising existing social networks, as well as creating new ones. These international student return migrants establish new communities and alternative spaces, confirming that migrants participate in the social construction of the place of destination, as highlighted by Tarrius (1993). Furthermore, these gatherings of young women and men returning from migratory experiences can be analysed through the lenses of estrangement and home making (Ahmed 1999). 'Having come from other places', they attempt to 'come together' in this new place (Ahmed 1999, 345). The sense of estrangement they may feel after returning to Tirana presses these young people to create new spaces and communities of exchange and interaction that, in turn, help transform the city itself. The creation of new social networks and connections is an adaptation to the new social reality in Tirana.

The chapter's fourth input centres on the paradox that the desire for stability pushes these women to consider additional re-emigration projects. Paradoxically, re-emigration means seeking stability in migration. More concretely, the cases analysed in this chapter reveal that return migration can rarely be seen as a permanent move but more often is part of a continuous migration process (Ley and Kobayashi 2009; Sondhi and King 2017). Although these women have more opportunities to find better jobs than highly educated women who have migrated only internally within Albania, these groups share the fact that their jobs are mostly characterised by precariousness. Some aspects of the post-return experiences are related to job insecurity, precariousness and sexual objectification. This finding is similar to the experiences of Indian female return student migrants who face a male-dominated labour market and a lack of freedom in everyday life (Sondhi and King 2017). Thus, the cases in this chapter show how paradoxically these women seek job stability in instability by planning to migrate again.

Moreover, their return migration is not a conclusive return as they describe themselves as in a situation of in between and estrangement (Ahmed 1999). As in other research (Mai and Paladini 2013; Ghosh and Wang 2003), some women can find that they fit culturally or economically neither abroad, where they have no work appropriate for their education, nor in Albania, where they feel culturally estranged. They report feeling at home nowhere, similarly to what Ghosh and Wang (2003) tell about their experience between India, China and Canada.

Finally, like the international migrant women discussed in Chapter 6, some women analysed in this chapter engage in circular migration upon return in Tirana to maintain contact with their networks abroad. In line with other research (Black and King 2004; Cassarino 2014; Dahinden

2010a), the cases in this chapter show that return does not entail total detachment from previous migratory experiences. Rather, return migration involves the maintenance of transnational linkages with previous social, professional and friendship networks and the continuation of some previous habits. The women featured in this chapter show that their return experiences appear to consist of a limbo in-between their hometowns, Tirana and abroad.

Chapter 8: Conclusions

I began this dissertation by asking, ‘*How can the interrelation of gender and migration in Albania be understood?*’. Three further questions were posed, calling for, first, investigating the tactics used by migrant women during migration, second, identifying their migratory trajectories and, finally, understanding their experiences in the city of Tirana. To answer these questions, interviews were conducted with thirty-two migrant women involved in internal or multiple migratory trajectories but all living in Tirana at the time of the fieldwork.

Based on the feminist perspective, this dissertation is aimed at analysing and highlighting some aspects of these migrant women’s experiences to help better understand the entanglements of gender and migration in Albania. The sample is separated into four groups—married women who migrated only internally, female students who migrated internally on their own, women who migrated internationally for purposes other than education and international female students who migrated on their own—to avoid homogenising Albanian female migrants, to highlight the particularities of each group’s experiences and to reveal what these specific experiences can tell about the social processes related to migration and gender. In this introductory section of this chapter, I start with three overall findings and then turn to the two core findings of the study. The particular insights emanating from these two core findings are detailed in the next five sections.

Quantitative analysis on Albanian migration (e.g. Galanxhi et al. 2004; Ekonomi et al. 2005; World Bank 2007; Stecklov et al. 2010) has revealed its significant magnitude but also contributed to forging a masculinised image of international migration and a feminised image of internal migration. During the 1990s, male international migrants certainly outnumbered women. Nevertheless, women, too, achieved a presence in this phase of migration, as shown by Vullnetari (2009, 2012), and not only as passive migrants leaving Albania for family reunification. The examples in this dissertation add to this line of research making visible women’s migratory experiences often hidden in statistical research. These examples highlight the first overall finding: *migrant women in Albania have been active in international migration since the early 1990s, often crossing borders in the same risky ways associated only with men.*

Studies (Morokvasic 1984a; Kofman 2004; Dahinden 2009, 2014; Wihtol de Wenden 2015; Vullnetari 2012) have shown that migration cannot be considered to be a single movement from the sending country to the receiving country but needs to be approached as a gendered process involving a multiplicity of movements. My analysis adds to this body of literature by capturing a broader picture of the intersection of gender and migration in Albania that goes beyond the mainstream image of female internal migration. In the second overall finding of this study, *migrant*

women in Albania engage in multiple migration trajectories combining internal, international, return and circular migration.

Migration is a complex process driven by many pull and push factors, and a single motivation cannot explain migration decisions (Castles and Miller 1998; Morokvasic 1984; Vianello 2009; Kihato 2009; Riaño and Baghdadi 2007). Furthermore, these motivations are gendered, as illustrated by the examples in this research, which brings us to the third overall finding: *women do not migrate only for economic and educational purposes but also for escape from the gender constraints and the patriarchal practices and customs prevailing in their villages and cities of origin.*

However, answering the main question raised at the beginning of this research requires returning to the deep investigation of these female migrants' experiences. This dissertation is situated in the research stream highlighting the complexities of the interrelation of gender and migration. Migration can challenge and transform but also reinforce gender equalities; it might lead to new opportunities and liberation or to new gender inequalities and precarity (Morokvasic 2003; Dahinden et al. 2007; Moujoud 2008; Vianello 2009; Sri Tharan 2010). Now, at the conclusion of this dissertation, the analysis clearly reveals this complex relation between gender and migration in which migrant women do not automatically move from inequality to liberation. Instead, in the first core finding, *the study results show that migrant women encounter various gender constraints and inequalities that might be different from those in their places of origin but have the same underlying mechanism of unequal gender relations.* Women, though, do not passively go through the migration process but mobilise the available resources and manifest agency (Pessar 1984; Morokvasic 2007, 2016; Schmoll 2005; Kihato 2009; Levy 2015; Dahinden 2010) in various forms, primarily tactics (De Certeau 1984). The concept of tactics, or the weapons of the weak (Scott 1985) who operate within the prevailing systems and cannot effect significant change in the dominant relations, gives a nuanced understanding of these women's manifestations of agency and processes of empowerment (Kabeer 1995) across their migration journeys. This brings us to the second (and complementary) core finding of the study: *these migrant women manifest their empowerment not in smashing deeply rooted gender relations and constructed gender roles but in deploying their agency and resources within the existing gendered power relations.*

The following key results expand these two main findings, elaborating their contributions to the body of literature on gender and migration. More specifically, these results explore the cases of female student migrants, the role of social networks, the experiences of return migration, the complexity of care chains and Tirana's role as a locus of the interplay of gender and migration.

8.1 Key results

8.1.1 *The complex relation among gender, migration and education*

The study of student migration, particularly internal migration, from a gender perspective remains a domain open to further development (King and Raghuram 2013; Sondhi and King 2017). One aim of this dissertation is to address this lacuna in the areas of both internal and international migration by exploring the experiences of Albanian female student internal and return migrants. Moreover, the number of female migrant students is growing and, in many cases, such as that of East Asia (Kim 2012, 31) exceeding that of male students. This trend holds true in Albania, too, where internal and international female students outnumber male. Nevertheless, going back to experiences rather than numbers at the intersection of gender and migration, this analysis shows that *young women in Albania use education for dual purposes: to cross physical internal and international borders and to break through the social barriers to the migration of young women alone*. Albanian families, independent of parents' education level, place significant value on education, largely due to the efforts of the communist regime (Danaj et al. 2005). At the same time, we see in the examples presented in this dissertation that kinship and communities do not widely accept migration by women on their own. However, Vullnetari (2009) and Kalaja (2014) argue that kinship and hometown communities gossip less and better accept young women who migrate on their own for educational purposes. Education, therefore, becomes a gendered value used by young women to leave their hometowns in a more socially acceptable way. Moreover, for international student migrants, education provides a way to cross borders in legalised, safe ways, with appropriate visas and often the financial support of scholarships.

Given the significant, socially accepted value of education, these student migrants sometimes rely heavily on financial and other supports from their parents. The cases show that, for instance, parents also protect their daughters from family and community gossip about their migration alone. A second major example is that parents free their daughters from their caregiver role so that they can migrate. Such cases are further explored here in section 8.1.4.

Adding to the international literature on gender and student migration (Ichimoto 2004; Matsui 1995; Kim 2012), and particularly contributing to that on Albanian migration, *this analysis highlights that for female students, both internal and international migration offer escape from the gender constraints in their hometowns*. Migrating to Tirana or international destinations also means fleeing from the social control of the roles and norms applied to young women that remain strong in their places of origin. Migration enables seeking a freer, more independent way of life.

However, in this context, a question emerges: what do these young women find in their destinations? Are they free from the gender constraints from which they seek escape? Here, we come to the third finding regarding this issue: the paradoxical situation of student migrants, as analysed in Chapter 7 and especially Chapter 5. *The results show that in the destination cities, female student migrants appreciate the anonymity in contrast to the social control in their places of origin but also encounter new gendered prejudices and constraints.* In Chapter 5, we see how student migrants in Tirana face prejudice and stigmatisation as young women who migrate alone. Moreover, they confront sexual harassment, especially in the workplace, as young women living alone. To cope with these new constraints, young women mobilise their resources and capital, as detailed in section 8.1.2.

More significantly, these cases give insights into the complexities of the relationship of gender and migration as migrant women juggle various gender constraints throughout their migration process. As highlighted in the second core finding of this study, the relation of gender and migration manifests not as women smash deeply rooted gender relations but as they use the available resources to achieve their objectives within the existing gendered relations. However, it is worth considering a little more how these student migrants transgress socially accepted gender expectations, as illustrated by the tactics young women employ to postpone marriage and motherhood. They see marriage as a loss of independence and a threat to their professional development, burdening them with care and housework. This dissertation is based on interviews conducted in 2012, and it is impossible to know the participants' future views on marriage. Nevertheless, the analysis shows that these women engage in numerous negotiations and tactics to postpone marriage, which continues to be the hegemonic form of family formation in Albania (Danaj et al. 2005; Lerch 2009). Interestingly, these tactics include using the father's role as the head of the household to escape the gendered requirement of marriage. Here, the logic of not fully disturbing the unequal gender roles persists. To postpone marriage, these young women use the same unequal gender roles they want to transgress.

8.1.2 The dynamics of social networks

Another noteworthy aspect of the intersection of gender and the migration process is the role of social relations and networks. Social relations and networks are crucial to understanding the patterns of migration, settlement, employment and links with home (Boyd 1989; Castles and Miller 1998; Hagan 1998). Moreover, in Albanian internal and international migration, social relations and networks are the key factors determining migration decisions, destination selection and organisation of the migration project (Çaro 2011; Vullnetari 2007, 2012, 2014). Unsurprisingly, the dissertation

results show that pre-existing networks often appear to make both internal and international migration an achievable option. Various existing social relations and networks are mobilised to accomplish the migration project and arrange logistical details for crossing internal and international borders and securing accommodations, employment and other matters.

Let us focus our attention on the further insights this study offers into the dynamic nature of social networks and the establishment of new ties in destinations (Boyd 1989; Ryan 2007). Regarding the dynamics of social networks throughout the migration process, *the findings evidence Albanian migrant women's ability to extensively use their resources to establish new ties and networks to adapt to new social realities*. These results add to the existing literature (e.g. Boyd 1989; Hagan 1998; Schmoll 2006; Ryan 2007; Dahinden 2010a) on the dynamics of social networks during the migration process by highlighting new gendered configurations of the role of these networks. On the other side, studies (Hagan 1998; Dahinden 2010a; Schmoll 2006) reveals that gender plays a critical role in the process of social relations creation, sometimes limiting it. For instance, Hagan (1998) shows that because of their confinement to domestic care jobs, Guatemalan female migrants suffered from lack of information regarding residence permit procedures, differently from male migrants who had more extended social relations. Examples illustrating how gender influences social networks structures are present in this dissertation too, as it follows.

First, to adapt to a new life in Tirana and to find sustainable jobs, internal student migrants need to rely heavily on well-developed social networks, particularly to access the labour market. In Tirana, nepotism and corruption dominate the labour market, and it appears quite impossible to find jobs without the right informal connections. To build the new connections needed in Tirana, these female students mobilise their existing social capital and their erotic capital, defined by Hakim (2010) as beauty, sexual attractiveness, flirtations, social presentation and sexuality. Together, these types of capital appear to be significant resources mobilised in the quest for a good employment and additional income. For instance, a case in Chapter 5 illustrates how a young student migrant engages in a sexual relationship with a married, wealthy man to create new connections and find a good office job

Second, we consider the networks created among the internal migrants in Tirana working as domestic workers. As developed in Chapter 4, domestic work is a newly emerged sector and employs many migrant women in Tirana. However, domestic work also remains an invisible sector in the formal labour market. Most domestic workers do not have contracts but only verbal arrangements setting their pay, work schedule, holidays and other job regulations. Lacking institutional information and networks, migrant domestic workers have set up solidarity networks of mutual support, sharing information about job openings and average pay to seek.

Third, international migrants in Greece mobilise their (in)formal employers to overcome administrative and everyday obstacles and to create new social networks. In the cases analysed in Chapter 6, migrant women in Greece, mostly in informal work, use their employers to build the new connections they need to handle various issues they encounter in their destination. For instance, these illegalised migrant women in Greece use their employers' important connections during the process of regularisation of residency permits. They also utilise their primary employers' connections to find additional part-time jobs and increase their financial capital.

Fourth, international students who have returned to Tirana provide an example revealing migrant women's capacity to adapt to new social realities. The cases analysed in Chapter 7 show that they construct new social networks that include mostly highly educated return migrants with similar experiences. They set up new communities and alternative art and culture spaces in attempts to 'come together' in this new place of Tirana, 'having come from other places' (Ahmed 1999, 345). The estrangement they feel towards both Tirana and their hometowns press these young women to create new networks and join these new spaces of exchange and interaction.

These examples demonstrate the women's capacity to adapt to the new social realities in their destination and to increase their social capital by creating new relations and networks. Gender informs these social relations and networks, often by limiting them, as we saw in the case of domestic care workers in Tirana for example. The mobilisation of one's erotic capital in view of expanding social relations and finding a job is an additional example of how gender influences the creation and structure of social relations.

These cases advance understanding of the complex intersection of gender and migration and the equally complex role of social networks at this intersection. Second, these participants show how women act to achieve their objectives within the existing unequal gender relations and often hostile institutional structures, such as nepotism in labour market access and Greece's strict immigration policies and informal labour market.

8.1.3 Gendered return experiences

We turn now to the phase of return migration and returnees' experiences. As known from existing research (King 2000; Cassarino 2004; Sri Tharan 2009), no single factor can fully explain return migration, and mixed motivations drive it. Moreover, these motivations are gendered. This section explains how the return experiences analysed in this study improve understanding of the intersection of gender and migration.

First, *the analysis shows that a major reason for returning to Albania is to care for and be close to one's parents. Gender affects the return project as caring for parents is considered to be women's responsibility.* This holds true for both student and non-student international migrants who return to care for their aging or sick parents. Furthermore, these cases add to the complex care chains, detailed in section 8.1.4, showing that the caregiver role remains exclusively feminised.

Second, this study reveals that another reason for returning to Albania is to invest in one's own business or find a job more appropriate for one's education and skills. Migrant women use the money they have saved and the professional knowledge they have gained while abroad to open their own businesses, such as hair salons, bakeries and dry-cleaning shops. This activity further illustrates the migrant status paradox (Nieswand 2011). In Greece and Italy, these migrant women experience devaluation of their social status, accepting jobs in the low-income and the informal segments of the labour market. Upon return to Tirana, though, their economic and social status increase due to their financial capital and knowledge, which they invest in enterprises and self-employment. *The study brings to the fore the ambiguity of women's increased status. In Albania, they gain status relative to their jobs in Greece but are hindered by the masculine state manifested in the bureaucratic institutions that discriminate against female entrepreneurs.* To cope with these situations, the women employ various tactics, such as being accompanied by male relatives and performing masculine behaviour. Paradoxically, they instrumentalise the same power of those whose dominance they try to challenge. Again, we have an illustration of the study's two main findings: during the migration process, women encounter old and new gender constraints and, to cope with them, employ various tactics within the existing unequal gender configurations.

8.1.4 From care chains to care webs: women's caregiver role

Another topic that frequently arises throughout this analysis is traditional, constructed gender roles that limit women to caring for their household and its members. Research (Hochschild 2000; Parreñas 2000, 2001; Viannello 2009; Lyberaki 2008; Lutz 2011; Vullnetari and King 2015) on gender and migration has extensively analysed care, mostly in global care chains. Understood as a series of personal links between people based on paid or unpaid work of caring, care chains may be local, national or global. They might start in poor countries and end in rich nations or move from rural to urban areas within the same poor country (Hochschild 2000). In this vein, researchers highlight the complex, post-1991 dynamics of care both for children and aging parents in Albania, including intra-familial support and employment of domestic care workers (Vullnetari and King 2015). Situated in this rich body of literature on care chains, the present analysis brings to the fore

further configurations that expose the complexity of care chains and the entanglements of gender and migration.

A first case of care chains involves the internal migrants to Tirana employed as domestic and care workers. This first configuration shows how Tirana women who enter the labour market pass on their care duties to internal migrants. The women who employ internal migrants as domestic care workers may be non-migrants, internal migrants or return international migrants themselves. In turn, the internal migrants employed as domestic care workers by women in Tirana transfer their mothering and caregiver roles to female relatives. This analysis thus points to the complexity of the intersections of internal and international care chains in the particular space of Tirana.

Second, internal and international migration by women often is possible only as women shift their care duties to their parents or their daughters. Women become free to migrate due to the intra-familial care chain, or family solidarity, in which female migrants' mothers or daughters assume their care role. This occurs in the case of both economic and student migration. For instance, grandparents look after their grandchildren, freeing the mother to migrate internationally for educational purposes or economic reasons. Several participants utilise this strategy I call intra-familial care chain so that they can engage in paid employment or migrate internally and internationally.

Another example of intra-familial care chains is the migrant women returning to care for their parents. Cases in Chapter 7 show how international student migrants return to care for their parents who are sick or face other troubles. Another explored case is that of an economic international migrant freed to migrate and work as domestic care worker in Greece as her parents-in-law assume her caregiver role. After several years of pendular migration, she returns to take care of them. In addition to an intra-familial care chain, this particular case illustrates how one migrant woman can take different places in the entrenched local and global care configurations and participate in multiple migration trajectories.

Finally, we come to the third case that further depicts the complexity of care chains, that of return female migrants. While in Greece, these women fill the care gap left by Greek women entering the productive workforce. These cases add to the body of literature demonstrating that the employment of international female migrants as domestic and care workers is framed, first, by the inadequacy of welfare regimes and, second, by the absence of legal immigration channels, sometimes compensated by toleration of illegalised migration and informal employment (Morokvasic 2014; Lyberaki 2008; Vianello 2009). The analysis shows that after returning to Albania, these female migrants who worked as domestic care workers in Greece remain in care chains but now in the opposite position: as employers, not employees. To fill the care gap in Albania and to engage in

productive work, often entrepreneurial initiatives, these same women hire internal migrants as domestic and care workers. This example illustrates how the city of Tirana emerges as part of entrenched global and local care configurations that, given their multiple entanglements, look more like care webs than care chains.

To conclude, the multi-layered care chains and webs described in this dissertation account for men's persistent lack of engagement in the caregiver role, in line with the literature (Hochschild 2000; Parreñas 2001; King and Vullnetari 2015). The study results emphasise that these migrant women do not share their constructed caregiver role with their male partners but transfer it to other women who are relatives or employees. This pattern again reinforces the study's core conclusion that migration does not fundamentally change gender relations or produce new gender arrangements. Instead, these migrant women operate mostly by deploying tactics to handle the same unequal gender arrangements.

8.1.5 Tirana as a site of paradoxical gendered migratory experiences

The researched women had various experiences and followed multiple migratory trajectories but all lived in Tirana at the time of the research. However, it was not the hometown of any of them. Tirana may be seen as a site where people, married and single men and women, from throughout Albania come to live, be educated and work and where different lifestyles intersect. Moreover, there is a continuous coming and going of migrants, whose trajectories, experiences and histories continuously intersect. Tirana can be described as balancing multiple worlds—the global and the local, the modern and the traditional, the sedentary (non-migrant) and the migrant. In the cases explored, the city of Tirana seems to more represent a 'crossroads of mobilities' than a place of 'sedentariness'/*sedentarité*, in the words of Tarrius (1993, 1, 52). Internal and returned migrant women living in Tirana are keen to engage in further international migration projects and maintain relationships in their destinations through circular migration. At the intersection of gender and migration, Tirana is the space where women find new opportunities and new configurations of gender relations but also the same underlying unequal mechanisms, as revealed in the following cases.

A first case of migrant women in Tirana, explored in Chapter 4, is that of internal migrants who moved with their families to Tirana for multiple reasons. Among potential internal migration projects, it offers the best economic, social and educational opportunities and is the most feasible option for a family migration project, balancing the needs of all family members and offering support from already-established social networks. However, Tirana also gives these women only

low-paying job opportunities in the informal labour market without regular contracts or social insurance.

Moreover, the analysis shows that moving to Tirana contributes to the nucleation process for those living in extended families, affecting gender relations within the family. The physical separation of housing is followed by reorganisation of economic responsibilities, giving women more power and leading to new negotiations of gender relations within the extended household. However, nucleation does not contribute to reorganising gender hierarchies; the husband remains the head of the household, with the most decision-making power. The new negotiations of gender relations take place within the existing unequal gender hierarchies. As shown in Chapter 4, in the context of the nuclear household, men, even when laid off and outside the realm of productive work, do not engage in domestic work. Furthermore, in cases when women become the primary breadwinners in the family, they still go to great pains to maintain for their children the façade that the man is the head of the household. Again, the transformation wrought by negotiating gender does not touch rooted hierarchical gender relations; to the contrary, migrant women seek to preserve them.

The second case consists of internal student migrants' experiences. To them, Tirana offers not only better educational opportunities but also a more autonomous life, far from the social control in their hometowns. Imaginaries of Tirana as a place bursting with opportunities and freedom and no social control through gender norms inform these women's migration projects. This accords with the literature on imaginaries as a powerful force shaping human action (Appadurai 1996) and imaginaries of equality as a driving force behind women's migration projects and actions (Riano 2015). The literature shows that one source of this imaginary is the media's bright portrayal of these places (Mai 2004; Kim 2012). However, Tirana disappoints the gendered imaginaries of a more equal, liberating place. The study results show that paradoxically, the lack of social control and the liberating dimension of Tirana are accompanied by new gender constraints and difficulties arising from the same underlying mechanisms as those from which the women escaped. These gender norms put them in new forms of precarity and gendered constraints, such as sexual prejudice, job precariousness and sexual objectification and harassment in the workplace. This paradoxical situation appears to inspire in female student internal migrants further gendered geographical imaginaries reflecting a gendered idealisation of abroad, turning Tirana into just a phase in their migratory project.

The third case is that of female international return migrants. Not surprisingly, the analysis shows that better economic and job opportunities are the primary reasons return migrants choose Tirana over their hometowns. However, more significant for the specific topic of this investigation,

the results contribute new insights into the intersections of gender and return migration. In particular, the analysis in chapters 6 and 7 show that for these women whose first migration abroad is an escape from the gender constraints in their hometowns, Tirana represents the ‘big city’ that may be still considered an escape from their hometowns. By staying in Tirana, they find a middle way between their previous homes in their hometowns and the homes they made while abroad. Gender informs their choice of Tirana over their hometowns which they consider to be less free in gender expectations and relations and to exert stronger social control—places to which they have become estranged.

A fourth case, already discussed in section 8.1.3 on return migration but worth briefly mentioning here too, consists of migrant women who return to invest their financial and know-how capital in Tirana. As mentioned, once in Tirana, they are hindered by dealing with masculine bureaucratic institutions during the process to open their businesses.

To conclude, this study shows that Tirana embodies a paradox: *for migrant women, Tirana is a city of new and increased education, employment and entrepreneurship opportunities; it is a city of anonymity and independence. At the same time, it is a city of precarious jobs, sexual prejudice and harassment and the masculine state.* Tirana thus appears to personify what the migration process is for these female migrants—the site of encounters with new opportunities but also new and old gender constraints, a site where the complex interplay of gender and migration is continuously manifested.

8.2 Achievements, limitations and suggests for further research

This research contributes to further understanding the intersection of gender and migration. First, the analysis results emphasise the importance of exploring migration through an integrative approach combining multiple migratory trajectories. This helps uncover and comprehend the complexity of female migration and their multitude of experiences throughout their various migration trajectories. Second, examining female migrants’ experiences aids in describing the complexities of the entrenchment of gender and the migration process through women’s own voices and perspectives. Analysing their experiences allows identifying and exploring the possible transformations that gender roles and relations undergo throughout the migration process, the experiences that make migrant women’s agency tangible and the opportunities and the constraints they encounter during their various migration trajectories. Third, this study examines female internal and international student migrants, an under-researched group within and beyond Albanian

migration. Analysing their experiences enables bringing out how gender intersects with this specific type of migration, whether internal or international.

This dissertation focusses on the experiences of migrant women living in the city of Tirana. Although Tirana is Albania's most populated city with the highest percentage of incoming migrants, restricting the analysis to only the city of Tirana may be considered to be a limitation of the research. What could this analysis have been if a comparative approach with Tirana and another city had been used? Although the research participants come from across Albania, the experiences of return, student and internal migrant women could be different in Tirana than other Albanian cities. Selecting two sites and comparing the experiences of migrant women in Tirana and another city would enrich the research. The analysis of female migrants' experiences in various regions of Albania remains open to future research on gender and migration in Albania, which could also break down the privilege granted to Tirana in this field.

As well, the sample could have been narrower, for instance, including only student migrants. This would have deepened the analysis of this domain of migration studies but also limited the picture of the complexities of female migration trajectories and the intersections of gender and migration. This study opens the way for further, in-depth research on internal and international student migration to contribute to the theorisation of gender and migration studies and policy research. Such research could offer insights into the Albanian and the international academic and policy contexts and highlight the interplay of structures, institutions and individuals throughout the process of female student migration. Focussing only on student migrants could allow comparison of the experiences of, for example, internal and international female student migrants; between students remaining to Tirana after their studies and those returning to their native home, etc. All these comparative perspectives could deepen understanding of the factors affecting the relation between gender and migration.

Another topic open to further research is the intersection of care, gender and migration. A significant body of international research on this topic provides a solid framework for further work on how local and global care chains manifest in a small, developing country, such as Albania. Scholars could also contribute a comparative perspective to this domain of research. Such an analysis could provide new insights into Albanian and foreign domestic workers in Tirana, the role of ethnicity and citizenship at the intersection of gender and migration, the relation of Albanian emigration and immigration and policy related to domestic workers, both Albanian and foreign.

Finally, as also stressed in other research (Vullnetari 2012), Albanian migration needs to be analysed through an integrative approach as a gendered process that includes various migratory trajectories. This study offers insights into how gender and the migration process influence each

other and how the gendered experiences of Albanian migrant women inform and, in turn, are shaped by their various migration trajectories, internal, international, circular and return. These complex entrenchments of gender and migration trajectories await further investigation to more deeply understand how gender influences social processes.

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Appendices: Interview's guiding grid

Common information

Background information

- Age
- family situation (information about members of the family)
- marital status
- education
- employment
- place of origin
- type of migration trajectories
- years and length of migration

Internal migrants

1. Situation before migration

- socio- economic situation,
- employment
- family relations,
- everyday life activities, etc.

2. The reasons and motivations for migration

3. Decision-making for migration (who and how was the decision taken)

4. The reasons for choosing Tirana as a place of destination

5. Actors involved in the migration process (family, kinship, friends, etc.)

6. Physical process of migration (logistics, etc.)

7. Life in Tirana

- housing and neighbourhood
- everyday life
- work experiences (contracts, salaries, etc.)
- family relations
- main difficulties
- main opportunities
- other significant experiences that the participant wants to add

8. Plans for the future

International migrants

1. Situation before migration
 - socio- economic situation
 - employment
 - family relations
 - everyday life activities, etc.
2. Reasons and motivations for migration
3. Decision-making for migration
4. Actors involved in the migration process (family, kinship, friends, etc.)
5. Physical process of migration (logistics, documents, etc.)
6. Experiences after having migrated abroad:
 - everyday life
 - work experiences
 - main opportunities
 - main difficulties
 - social networks
 - family relations
 - legal situation in the country (ies) of destination
 - other significant experiences that the participant wants to add
7. Reasons for returning in Albania
8. Reasons for having chosen Tirana as the place of return.
9. Life in Tirana
 - housing
 - everyday life
 - work experiences (contracts, salaries, etc.)
 - family relations
 - main difficulties
 - main opportunities
 - other significant experiences that the participant wants to add
10. Plans for the future