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GOVERNING IRREGULAR MIGRATION

ΣΥΓΚΡΙΤΙΚΗ ΕΡΕΥΝΑ
COMPARATIVE PAPER

ACTORS AND FACTORS IN THE GOVERNANCE OF IRREGULAR MIGRATION:

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ALBANIAN, GEORGIAN, UKRAINIAN, PAKISTANI AND AFGHANI IRREGULAR FLOWS TO GREECE

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Introduction: the Puzzle of Irregular Migration

The loss of over a thousand human lives in the effort to cross the Mediterranean during April 2015 has once again drawn media and political attention to the challenges that the EU is facing in its efforts to govern migration and asylum. However, what seems to be still far from complete is our (the experts and the politicians) understanding of what drives people to put their lives at risk in search of a better future. What are the motivations of migrants, and what information do they have, how do they organise the journey, how much do they know and how much are they in control of their own destinies?

The IRMA project (Governing Irregular Migration: States, Migrants and Intermediaries at the Age of Globalisation) focuses on these questions, considering (irregular) migration a complex social process. Bruno Latour (1999: 182) argues that it is not an airplane or a pilot that flies "Flying is a property of the whole association of entities that includes airports and planes, launch pads and ticket counters". Similarly migration is not about migration policies nor about single people who move, it is about both migrants and non-migrants, human actors and institutions, migration industry or infrastructure (Xiang and Lindquist 2014).

International migration has intensified during the last two decades both across the East to West and the South to North axis: Europe is receiving increasing numbers of migrants from developing countries in Africa and Asia and also Latin America. Part of this international movement of people takes place unauthorised, notably involves either unlawful border crossings or overstaying (with or without visa). European countries that are situated at the southern and eastern borders of the EU find themselves particularly exposed to irregular migration and asylum seeking pressures from Asia, Africa and Latin America. Even though irregular migrants are only a small fraction of overall immigrant populations, public opinion often considers irregular migration to be out of control and that national governments are not doing enough to stop it. The media spotlights are usually focused on border controls and unlawful border crossings, although research has shown that most irregular migrants arrive through legal means (with a tourist or student visa, with fake passports etc.).

The total immigrant population in the EU-27 on 1 January 2013 was 34.1 million foreigners (6.7% of the total resident population of 505.7 million people). Of those nearly two thirds, notably 20.4 million are third country nationals while the remaining 13.7 million are EU citizens who live in a different member state. Approximately 3/4s (77%) of all migrants live in the five larger EU countries notably Germany (7.7 million), Spain (5.1 million), the UK (4.9 million), Italy (4.4 million) and France (4.1 million). But several small countries register high numbers of foreigners in their population such as Austria for instance (with 10.5% of its population being foreigners) but also Belgium, and of course Greece with approximately 7% of its population being immigrants.

The irregular migrant population in the EU was estimated at 1.9-3.8 million in 2008 (Vogel et al. 2009, Clandestino project), i.e. well below 1% of the total population and approximately 10-20% of the total non EU immigrant population. It is worth noting that

the undocumented immigrant population in the USA was estimated at 11.1 million by the Pew Hispanic Centre study (Pew 2013) issued in January 2013 based on data from the 2011 census. A few years back Khalid Koser (2007: 57-59) argued that the percentage of irregular migration among total movements in Asia and Latin America is likely to be beyond 50%. These estimates suggest that irregular migration is an important issue of concern albeit the political importance given to it may be disproportionately high if we look at the overall percentage of irregular migrants within the total migrant or the total resident population.

Both irregular migration and asylum seeking constitute global challenges in the sense that they are international in nature (involving at least two countries, the country of origin and the country of destination) and transnational in their implications (the push and pull factors creating the flows are mediated by transnational networks and transnational institutions or actors that make the migration possible; the asylum norms are also transnational in their nature; and the interdependence among the different countries involved is such that their governance needs a certain level of transnational management and cooperation).

Literature explains international migration as caused by global socio-economic inequality, ethnic conflict, civil unrest, political instability, environmental hazards, or simply sheer poverty cause people to leave their countries of origin seeking better employment and living conditions (migrants) or seeking protection (asylum seekers) in other countries. Irregular migration and asylum seeking flows are often closely intertwined. People become more aware of the better prospects that potentially await them in developed countries. Information travels faster than before, and means to get connected through IT as well as means of transport are also cheaper and faster. The erosion of national boundaries create also more space and scope for local or transnational actors to be involved in irregular migration whether as local or transnational criminal networks involved in migrant smuggling or human trafficking, or as local NGOs or international organisations. As Castles and Miller (2009) evocatively have titled their often-quoted book, we live in "the age of migration".

Southern European countries attract large numbers of irregular immigrants not simply due to their geographic position as the EU's external borders (although this is a decisive factor), but crucially because of their inadequate policy responses and highly bureaucratic administrations, as well as due to labour market structures, with high demand for cheap and flexible work and large informal sectors (Sassen 2000; King 2000; Baldwin-Edwards 2008; Triandafyllidou and Maroukis 2008; Triandafyllidou and Ambrosini 2011; Maroukis et al 2011).

Particularly Greece's transition to immigration at the early 1990s involved predominantly irregular movements, mostly from neighbouring Balkan countries. The undocumented character of the flows had to do with the lack of a policy for managing economic migration and a reluctance to recognise that this was a long term trend, not just a short-lived phenomenon after 1989 and the implosion of the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe. Indeed Greece transformed de fact into a destination country while it regularised through three large "amnesty" programmes (in 1998, 2001 and 2005) hundreds of thousands of migrant workers (and their families) employed in agriculture,

construction, tourism, small manufactures, cleaning and domestic care. With shifting channels and routes of migration, and adjustments of smuggling operations to policy developments, Greece has witnessed flows increasing in the second half of the 2000s, transcending both its maritime borders and its eastern land border with Turkey. Violence and conflicts in the Middle East as well as wider areas of Africa and Asia have swelled both the migrant and asylum seeking flows towards Europe in general and towards Greece in particular in the last five years.

The IRMA project investigates the dynamics of irregular migration (and asylum seeking) and the ways in which different actors and factors affect the nature and direction of the flows within an overall restrictive EU and national (Greek) migration policy regime. The project seeks to uncover the dynamics of the governance of irregular migration, taking as its focus not the policies, as most of the literature has done so far, but rather the migrants as central actors in the field. We have investigated how migrants learn about and respond to the policies, how they make decisions and execute their plans, and eventually adopt a pathway or strategy of mobility. The project has thus concentrated on how migrants make sense of their own needs and wishes and how they conceptualise their (legal or irregular) mobility.

The empirical research undertaken in this project concentrates on Greece investigating five migrant groups that have a strong presence among the irregular migration and asylum seeking flows in the country, notably, Albanians, Georgians, Ukrainians, Afghans and Pakistanis. The project has developed along five parallel case studies in the five countries of origin of the migrants and this report focuses on the comparative analysis of the five case studies.

The report starts with a critical reflection on irregular migration, reviewing the relevant scholarly literature and identifying the analytical framework within which the IRMA research is placed. Section three introduces the case of Greece and its main policies on irregular migration and asylum that provide the framework for the analysis that follows. Section four presents the research design in terms of migration systems and countries of origin chosen, while section five discusses the findings of the IRMA case studies, reorganising them on the basis of four nodal points, notably what happens before leaving, turning the decision to action, the first arrival, and the decision to move on or return.

Our analysis highlights the similarities and differences among the five different nationality groups/countries of origin with regards to these four nodal points. Our focus is on how the agency of the migrant plays out, under specific structural conditions (of a given set of initial social, economic and political resources), through interaction with a number of intermediate factors (including other social actors like employers, smugglers, NGOs or international organisations but also national policies and national authorities that shape the migrant's plans and actions). The analysis is anthropocentric in that it seeks to cast light to the governance of irregular migration starting not from the policies and the government actors, but by focusing on the migrant as the agent that moves. It is our contention that such an anthropocentric perspective improves our actual understanding of how migration control and migration management policies affect irregular migration. We thus actually bypass the typical dichotomy between legal and irregular migration, concentrating on the essence of mobility, notably the desire and need of the individual to

move which brings them to navigate a complex environment with imperfect information. Our concluding remarks are presented in section seven.

1. International (Irregular) Migration in the 21st Century

The migratory movements of today are affecting virtually every part of the globe. This is primarily what Castles and Miller (2009) called the *globalisation of migration*. The geographical span of global migration trends is evolving into an ever-complex map where previous patterns described as "settler", "colonial", or "guest worker" migrations give rise to new forms of legal and irregular migration, co-ethnic and diaspora movements as well as phenomena like the feminization of migration (Triandafyllidou and Gropas 2014). There is today a multiplicity of types and forms of migration and a diversity of migratory channels and routes, partly resulting from evolving and fragmented migratory policies. In addition, the *migration transition* no more follows explicit linear patterns as in the past, and several countries or entire regions emerge at the same time as sending, receiving and transit ones. Moreover, in all major regions one may observe an *acceleration* of migratory flows. In the past half century, the numbers of international migrants[1] have surged: from about 77 million in 1960 to 155.5 in 2000, 195.2 in 2005 and nearly 214 in 2010 (UNDP 2009). Their proportional increase however has not been that spectacular: from 2.6% in 1960 to 3% in 2010, international migrants still make up a tiny share of the global population.

While, in abstract terms, the root causes of migration remain essentially same as ever, i.e. economic need, security and better quality of life prospects (including a future for one's offspring), there has been diversification, blurring and overlap of the specific factors fuelling migration on a global scale. Migration theories of the past overstressed static push-pull factors, and neoclassical economics focused on wage differentials and other developmental disparities – both largely remaining the case. Nevertheless, rather than rationally acting individuals deciding on their own upon cost-benefit calculations, the new economics of labour migration shifted the level of analysis towards the micro and meso levels, highlighting the importance of family networks in migration decisions, as well as the migratory process at large (Stark 1991).

The rise of international migration in the last decades is linked to growing inequalities, but also to the growing social and economic interdependence and interconnectedness that characterises the first decades of the 21st century (King 1995; Stalker 2000; Solimano 2010). These may be based upon the complex economic underpinnings of contemporary migration, as exemplified for instance in its relationship with accelerated and liberalised international trade (e.g. Solimano 2010, ch. 3.2) or in the deeply intertwined mobility of labour and capital, usually moving in the opposite directions (Sassen 1990). People, however, do not take emigration decisions in a vacuum, neither respond mechanically to shifting conditions at home or changes in demand at

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[1] The UN defines "international migrants" as people residing for at least a year outside their country of birth.

destinations. The dramatic rise in global inequalities takes place at a time of improved infrastructure for mobility and information which facilitates communication flows and mobility.

Even if information may reach them in an often-distorted way, people are increasingly *aware* of potentially better prospects elsewhere through images transmitted by global media and the internet, but also by those already departed, their stories and visible benefits to relatives left behind e.g. from remittances and western-style consumption. Homogenising lifestyles and consumer habits, diffuse more than ever a sense of *relative deprivation* in comparison to "Western" living standards and the possibilities for personal development in the North (Koser 2007; Castles and Miller 2009), thus rendering spatial mobility a generalised means for social mobility (Bommes and Sciortino 2011b: 214). Cheap payphone cards, Skype and other ICT tools help them keep in touch while abroad, essentially transforming the figure of the migrant from an uprooted person to a connected one (Diminescu 2008). Established transnational social networks and diaspora communities abroad not only affect migration decisions, but may also assist with movement itself and provide support or employment in destination (Cohen 2008; Vertovec 2009).

In addition, advances in transportation have made travel more affordable by bringing distant lands in the reach of more and more people. What is more, accelerated global mobility has given rise to an entire "industry" of migration involving individuals, institutions, humanitarian organisations, legitimate private companies and transnational criminal networks. The wide range of intermediate actors includes "labour recruiters, immigration lawyers, travel agents, brokers, housing providers, remittances agencies, immigration and customs officials, institutions such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and NGOs that provide assistance and shelter to migrants and refugees" (Koser 2007: 38). The commercial side of the industry is "a system of institutionalised networks with complex profit and loss accounts" (Salt and Stein 1997: 467), and smuggling and trafficking are the obvious illegitimate side of this business (Koser 2010: 189).

In the following sub sections we review the literature with a view to framing the research questions that have guided our study. First we look at the concept of mixed flows (of irregular migrants and asylum seekers) and argue that it is motivations that should be conceptualised as mixed not the flows. Second, we argue for the centrality of migrants' agency in the process. Third we consider the interaction between migration control policies and smuggling networks. Indeed as a lot of researcher have argued smuggling does not create irregular migration but it is rather that control policies create a business space for smugglers to act. Fourth we point to the fact that irregular migration is often functional to receiving countries' labour markets and migration control policies often indirectly create the docile and cheap labour force that some labour market sectors needs instead of limiting irregular migration.

1.1 Mixed flows or mixed motivations?

The legal categories defining migrants in destination countries tend to present irregularity as an "on-off" condition (Bommes and Sciortino 2011b: 219). However, this view obscures the complex and fluid nature of irregularity in migration which entails an entire spectrum of categories involving various combinations of residence status and work arrangements and their compliance to national laws. The dynamic character of legal status is best exemplified by what has been termed "befallen illegality" to describe situations such as those observed in Southern Europe, whereby migrants who initially entered the country without documents, have later managed to sort out their status but may shift back to irregularity faced with difficulties in renewing their permits, e.g. due to inability to prove formal employment (Triandafyllidou 2010: 8). The fluidity of legal status thus depends not simply on individual circumstances or strategies, neither solely on conditions of entry, but crucially on changes in immigration policy and labour market dynamics. At times of economic crisis for instance, while regular jobs dry out and unemployment rises, informal, under-paid and uninsured jobs may flourish. This may mean that migrants are still able to work albeit they lose their legal residence status because they are unable to prove their employment.

Irregularity is a legal and political construct deriving more from immigration legislation, rather than from the mere act of crossing a border without documents or authorisation. Nevertheless, irregularity as both clandestine entry and undocumented residence is regarded as "an affront to sovereignty because it is evidence that a nation is not in control of its borders" (Dauvergne 2004: 598). Therefore, cracking down on irregular migration becomes, among other things, a matter of legitimacy of the state apparatus: "In the face of diminished capacity in economic policy and trade realms, in military matters and corporate management, cracking down on illegal migration represents a strong assertion of sovereign control" (ibid.: 600).

Irregular migration routes and smuggling activities blur the distinction between different categories of people who may cross international borders. In their attempt to flee towards safety, refugees may resort to the services of human smugglers, while migrants with primarily economic motives may resort to asylum routes in the hope of gaining legal stay (Koser 2010: 183; see also van Hear et al. 2009). Van Hear (2009: 10) points out that "mixed migration" is primarily associated with policy agendas in (western) destination countries, reflecting concerns over irregular migration and unfounded asylum claims and the return of reject asylum seekers and undocumented migrants to their countries of origin. Apart from situations where "refugees and other migrants move alongside each other making use of the same routes and means of transport and engaging in the services of the same smugglers", having close links in transit countries and similar experiences in destination ones, "mixed migration" may also refer to the changing character of movement along the way (van Hear et al.: 9-10, 12).

Koser (2008) reports on the intermingling of irregular migratory routes and smuggling to the West of Afghans and Pakistanis, the former generally eligible for asylum in the EU, the latter considered as driven by economic motives. Van Hear et al. (2009) offer a similar example of how refugees may use established routes for both migration and

trade, using the example of Afghans who often embark their journey to Europe from refugee camps in Pakistan, while those of them who found refuge in Iraq become labour migrants. Such dynamics are also exemplified in our case studies (particularly Dimitriadi (2015), on Afghans, and Maroufof (2015), on Georgians).

Furthermore, it is not always clear whether the root causes of movement, or the primary motivations of a migrant, pertain to the category of "forced" or "voluntary" migration (see also Ottonelli and Torresi 2013). Motivations of international movement are mixed and a variety of factors play a role, including efforts to improve one's economic situation and livelihood and the search for protection in case of war, insecurity or also outright persecution. We may actually speak of a continuum rather than of two neatly separated categories of migrants vs asylum seekers (Schuster 2015). Even refugees fleeing persecution maintain a certain degree of agency, a certain level of control over their lives, which they exercise when taking the decision to migrate. Nonetheless this does not mean that their migration is voluntary. Schuster (2011, 2015) uses the example of Afghan immigrants and refugees to show how mixed motivations and blurred situations exist on the ground, that are difficult to codify and put in the neat boxes of migration and asylum seeking policies conceived in Europe and North America.

1.2   *Migrants' Agency*

Migrants, of course, do not "respond" in a functional way to developmental pressures or inequalities "pushing" them out of their countries, neither do they head to "satisfy" labour demands in host societies. Macro-level structural conditions may set the ground for migration, but **the subjective who, when, why and how of migration remains a matter of individuals, households, as they are enmeshed in their social, economic and political environment**. The study of irregular migration redefines anew one of the oldest problems in the social sciences, that of the relationship between human agency and social structure. The way structure is mediated through the individual is not simply a question of weighting opportunities and constraints, but a complex interplay of proactive practices, coping strategies, identity negotiations, and multiple ways to mobilise social, material and cultural capital.

The role of capital in migration is particularly important and as we shall argue later on, migrants manage to actually not only mobilise but also convert one form of capital into another (see also Van Hear 2014) by for instance using social networks to get a free pass with a smuggler across a border, or mobilise their kinship network to collect the money for paying for their trip, or for finding a job. Indeed what counts is the overall capital that the migrant accumulates and manages to mobilise. Capital should not be understood as limited. The migrant on the move may also generate new capital not only by working and earning money, but also by developing new connections, obtaining and distributing (or withholding information), putting people into contact or indeed acquiring new skills.

The human agency of migrants is exercised at a first place by engaging in spatial mobility as a means for social mobility (Bommes and Sciortino 2011), and this is often a collective family decision since the very beginning (Stark 1991). But how do people engage in situations that may put their lives in a limbo, often for a long time and with ambivalent

outcomes? How do they take decisions that involve enormous costs and risks beyond their control? How do they take the step to become "illegal" and how do they negotiate this?

There are no simple answers to these questions. Of course one may say that "people take the risks "because they are desperate to escape poverty and repression, because policy changes leave them with little option, or because they are actively recruited by the migration industry" (Koser 2010: 189). Further, the question of information is central in the process: about the costs and dangers involved in irregular travel, about the risks of being smuggled across a border, or about conditions in destination lands. But, as Koser (2010) points out, none of this provides an explanation of why and how one decides to migrate in an irregular manner.

And yet, in most cases, migrants do not subsume themselves passively to the exploitation of unscrupulous smugglers. This is not to ignore the very reality of numerous human tragedies involved in the world of smuggling, trafficking, and irregular border crossings, but rather to point to the fact that migrants exercise varying degrees of autonomy and interact with their smugglers in a variety of ways, often including relations of trust (van Liempt 2007; Khosravi 2007; Koser 2008; 2010; Triandafyllidou and Maroukis 2012).

Irregular migrants develop different survival strategies and coping practices in order to cover up their status, or even use it in their advantage. Engbersen (2001) describes a range of such strategies: from operating strategically in the public space and resisting the state's gaze to becoming invisible, to marrying citizens or legal residents, most often from within settled ethnic communities, or manipulating identity and nationality, e.g. by buying, renting and selling passports and other (forged or genuine) documents (also Vasta 2008). Even in the labour market, migrants may manipulate their status apart from being constrained by it (Anderson 2008).

1.3 *Migration Control Policies and Smuggling Networks*

Our study of migration control policies is based on two sets of distinctions (see also Vogel 2000; Triandafyllidou and Ambrosini 2011). The first distinction is to be made between external and internal immigration policies: external immigration policies are those directed at potential immigrants outside the regulating state and at the border, while internal immigration policies are those which concern migrants already inside the nation's borders. Secondly, irregular migration control policies can be distinguished on the basis of whether they follow a 'fencing' or a 'gate-keeping' strategy: gate-keeping strategies aim at restricting legal access to a nation and its institutions, while fencing measures actively target undocumented migrants in order to arrest and then expel them. Typically, gate-keeping involves paper controls of people who seek to enter a country or who come voluntarily forward, while fencing involves detecting persons in hiding and trying to deter/stop those who seek to enter without appropriate authorisation.

Migration control policies produce a range of unintended effects and unanticipated consequences. On the part of the migrants, these include increased risks and dangers, but also costs, vulnerability to human rights abuses and exploitation, retreat to informal and

sometimes criminal networks, but also a higher propensity of permanent settlement, as well as assistance and support by ethnic communities. On the part of smuggling networks, one may observe their professionalization and further marketization, perhaps also higher intermingling with organised crime. On the part of states, increasing costs of border control and exacerbating moral panic about migration with improbable outcomes at a time of generalised crisis (Duvell 2006).

Research in the field of human smuggling has "documented the creativity of the irregular migration infrastructure and its relationship to larger migratory systems", (Bommes and Sciortino 2011b: 221), established it as a new "intermediate structure" (van Liempt 2007) and has dispelled the myths of mafia-controlled criminality equating smuggling with human trafficking (Triandafyllidou and Maroukis 2012). Moreover, in contrast to earlier criminological studies viewing smugglers as the only active actors in the process (Ruggiero 1997), but also in original accounts of smuggling as a business (Salt and Stein 1997), the agency of migrants is now well established, as well as their multiple interactions with those providing the service, and, crucially, the importance of trust between migrants smugglers as well as within the smuggling schemes (Triandafyllidou and Maroukis 2012, van Liempt 2007).

Doomernik and Kyle (2004) explain the growth of the human smuggling as an outcome of the increasing difficulties in border-crossing and entry in countries of destination and transit, as a result of border enforcement and immigration controls. In that sense smuggling is a product of state policies. Increased investment in combating smuggling coupled with the criminalisation of irregular migration and undocumented migrants has only resulted in "encouraging ever more illegal migration" and growing involvement of organised crime (Doomernik and Kyle 2004: 270, 271). While agreeing on the growth of smuggling as a result of tightening controls, however, Van Liempt (2007: 14) has questioned conventional assumptions alleging a relationship between smuggling and growth of migration rates. Instead of creating irregular migration as such, smuggling blurs the distinction between different categories of migrants and asylum seekers. Immigrants, on their part, resorting to the illegitimate side of these services may not perceive this form of travel as an act of crime "even though they are well aware that the process is not legal (Doomernik and Kyle 2004: 268).

1.4   *Irregular Migration and Labour Market Inclusion*

A primary sphere for migrant inclusion at the host society is the labour market; yet lacking the necessary documents, in most cases irregular migrants accept any work at any wage, with no social protection and no union representation. Portes had argued nearly four decades ago, with regard to the specific case of Mexican migration to the United States, that 'illegal' migration should not be seen as a problem, but rather as a solution to a problem (1978: 470), namely the mismatch between economic demand and immigration policy. Baldwin-Edwards (2008) asserted that this is now the case across the developed world and largely in Europe. This may suggest that there is a demand not for irregular migrants as such, but for workers willing to work under the specific conditions and wages

this is provided (Anderson and Ruhs 2012: 24). At times of economic booms, in particular, this might even be implicitly inherent in restrictive immigration policy agendas, even if never explicitly acknowledged until an amnesty or regularisation programme takes place. Reflecting on the UK case, Anderson (2007) underlines the contradiction between the high control exercised upon migrant workers and the hyper-flexible labour they provide, and wonders whether immigration controls are truly a tap regulating entry, or actually a mould constructing certain types of workers. Thus the reliance on migrant labour may well be a policy choice serving domestic labour market demand and employers' interests (Anderson and Ruhs 2012). Combatting irregular migration with a view of extinguishing it does not seem to be worth the cost in material and human resources or in civil liberties (Martin 2003).

Indeed the toleration of undocumented migration does not then reflect a state's incapacity to assert full control over movement, neither ineffective labour market regulation, but also that "official declared policies may be different from actual intentions" (Pécoud and Guchteneire 2005: 5). Such intentions may be based even on conscious cost-benefit estimations, for instance assuming that capital-owners and skilled workers will gain more than what unskilled workers may lose (e.g. in terms of dropping wages), or considering the positive externalities of informal employment, such as productivity gains, small business survival, employment growth, etc. (Jahn and Straubhaar 1998: 28). As, in the last few decades, official immigration programmes in developed countries target primarily skilled (most often highly skilled) immigrants, formally recognising that side of demand, it is the part of the demand concerning unskilled or low skilled work that remains neglected, or rather fulfilled at the margins of the system through tolerated irregular migration.

Irregular migrants are typically encountered in areas, sectors or businesses characterised by both a demand for cheap and flexible labour and a tendency to escape regulations or controls: multi-ethnic cities and rural areas, construction, tourism and personal services, small enterprises and households (Duvell 2006). In Southern European countries, largely dependent on seasonal activities (construction, tourism, agriculture), their extensive underground economies have had considerable pull effects on irregular migration movements of the past couple of decades (Reyneri 2003).

In Europe, irregular migration is also part and parcel of welfare regimes (Bommes and Sciortino 2011a: 16), not simply because the universal welfare state may be a magnet for immigrants, but crucially in respect to the welfare-related part of demand immigrant labour responds to. More specifically, the ageing of European populations entails both social as well as fiscal implications, while the incorporation of women to the labour force in earlier decades and the subsequent changes in gender relations and the domestic division of labour create a vacuum of previously unpaid female labour in the domestic sphere. Coupled with budget cuts under austerity policies in recent years, such transformations result in serious welfare deficits, which generate a demand for workers in reproductive activities such as those involving a variety of household and caretaking tasks; by definition difficult to be regulated, such activities often fall beyond the scope of formal economic arrangements (Ambrosini 2013).

Piore (1979) had observed that labour market segmentation in advanced economies was the key variable to understand how immigrant employment was sustained despite high and growing rates of unemployment. Thirty-five years later, irregular migration and informal work are both related to the fragmentation of global labour markets (Solimano 2010). As Baldwin-Edwards (2008: 1452) has put it: "migrants now fill marginal niches in highly segmented labour markets", and it is precisely this economic marginalisation that results "in a socio-political perception that immigrants are no longer needed – despite persistent demand for their services".

Having provided the analytical framework that underpins our study we offer in the following section an overview of the Greek context, the size and features of irregular migration and asylum seeking stocks and flows and the current policy framework within which our case studies are framed.

2. The Case of Greece: Irregular Migration and Asylum

Approximately 8.5 % of Greece's total population are foreigners. According to the 2011 national census data, there were 713,000 third country nationals and 199,000 EU citizens (non-Greek) living in Greece accounting respectively for 6.5% and 1.8% of the total resident population. The largest nationality groups (including EU citizens) were Albanians (480,000), Bulgarians (75,000), Romanians (46,000), Pakistanis (34,000), Georgians (27,000), Ukrainians (17,000) and Poles (14,000).

Table 1: Stock of Foreign Population according to National Census Data, Greece, 2011

	Size of immigrant stock	% of total resident population
Total TCN population	713,000	6.59
Total EU population (non Greeks)	199,000	1.84
Total immigrant stock	912,000	8.43
Total population of Greece	10,815,197	100.00

Source: Hellenic Statistical Authority (EL.STAT.), National Census 2011, data published in September 2013.

Greece has been characterised by relatively high irregular migrant population stocks and flows during the past 25 years. The evolution of presumed inflows of irregular

migrants (as registered through apprehensions at border areas) has fluctuated (see table 2). The most notable reduction is at the Greek Albanian border as of 2011 and particularly this year, though this is closely related to the exemption from a visa requirement of Albanian nationals who are entering the EU for periods shorter than 90 days as of December 2010. Apprehensions of Albanians went up again during 2014 and early 2015, but almost all are returned to Albania immediately.

As regards the "hot" Greek/EU external border, notably the border with Turkey, the trends show that the Greek Turkish land and sea borders follow the hydraulic principle: when inflows at the land border rise, they fall at the sea borders, and conversely when the land border crossings are abandoned (towards the end of 2010 and as of 2011) the island entries rise. Surely these trends are strongly influenced by geopolitical developments in the region since the Arab spring in 2011 and particularly the implosion of the Libyan regime, the conflict in Syria as well as the overall instability and conflict in the Middle East which have reshuffled the irregular migration and asylum seeking routes in the whole south-eastern Europe and the Mediterranean. Thus while in 2012-2013, Italy carried the brunt of these developments (since the lack of law and order in Libya was facilitating the operations of the smuggling networks ferrying migrants through Libya to Italy and Malta), during 2014 and the first months of 2015, numbers of arrivals at the Greek Turkish borders in the Aegean sea and its islands have increased dramatically from just over 2,500 in 2013, to over 42,000 in 2014. A fourfold further increase is registered if we compare the first three months of 2014 and the first three months of 2015 (3,324 apprehensions at the Greek Turkish sea border in January to March 2014 compared to 12,643 apprehensions during the same period in 2015).

Table 2: Apprehensions of irregular migrants, per border, 2007-2014

Apprehensions	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014*
Greek Albanian border	42,897	39,267	38,164	33,979	11,743	10,927	10,413	9,290
Greek FYROM border	2,887	3,459	2,355	1,589	1,003	1,168	1,041	1,216
Greek Bulgarian border	966	1,795	1,258	983	636	365	505	780
Greek Turkish land border	16,789	14,461	8,787	47,088	54,974	30,433	1,122	1,914
Greek Turkish sea border	16,781	30,149	27,685	6,204	814	3,610	2,525	42,651
Crete	2,245	2,961	2,859	2,444	1,640	2,834	2,557	3,093
Rest of the country	29,799	54,245	45,037	40,237	29,372	31,151	16,253	18,219
TOTAL	112,364	146,337	126,145	132,524	99,368	76,878	34,416	77,163

Note: data refer to apprehensions, not to people. Hence the same person if apprehended twice counts twice.
Source: Greek police data,
http://www.astynomia.gr/index.php?option=ozo_content&lang=%27..%27&perform=view&id=50610&Item id=1240&lang= last accessed on 27 April 2015

A closer look at the nationalities of the migrants apprehended in Greece because undocumented, we notice the emergence of Syrians as the largest group in 2014, for the first time entering the top-5 in 2012, rising to 2nd place in 2013 and accounting for 3/4s of all apprehensions at the Greek Turkish sea border (32,000 out of 42,000). Afghans remain an important group even if with much fewer apprehensions compared to the period 2009-2012, rising however again to 12,901 in 2014. Indeed one might argue that Afghans have stopped coming and those who had come have probably moved on to some other European country. Interestingly Pakistanis have also declined in absolute numbers from nearly 20,000 in 2011 to approx. 2,000 in 2014, even if they remain within the top 5 nationality groups as regards apprehensions.

Table 3: Apprehensions of irregular migrants in Greece (at the borders and within the country, 5 main nationality groups) 2009-2014

2009		2010		2011		2012		2013		2014	
Albania	63,563	**Albania**	50,175	Afghanistan	28,528	**Afghanistan**	16,584	**Albania**	15,389	Syria	32,520
Afghanistan	17,828	**Afghanistan**	28,299	Pakistan	19,975	**Pakistan**	11,136	Syria	8,517	**Albania**	16,751
Palestine	10,763	**Pakistan**	8,830	Albania	11,733	**Albania**	10,602	**Afghanistan**	6,412	**Afghanistan**	12,901
Somalia	7,710	Palestine	7,561	Bangladesh	5,416	Syria	7,927	**Pakistan**	3,982	**Pakistan**	3,621
Iraq	7,662	Algeria	7,336	Algeria	5,398	Bangladesh	7,863	Bangladesh	1,524	Somalia	1,876

Source: Ministry for the Protection of the Citizen,
http://www.astynomia.gr/index.php?option=ozo_content&lang=%27..%27&perform=view&id=50610&Item id=1240&lang= last accessed on 27 April 2015.

Since 2009, Greece has become sadly famous in Europe for its failing asylum system which was characterised by inappropriate processing of the applications (impossibility to access the relevant service and file an application, no information given at border areas or when apprehended, once an application was filed, decisions mainly taken on the basis of the (safe or unsafe) country of origin, no substantial asylum interviews, overall process mishandled by police persons that had not received any asylum training, and no political will to improve things). In addition there was a major concern with the inhuman and degrading conditions of detention of pending asylum seekers and about the fact that, when they were released with a pink card (temporary permit allowing them to stay in Greece while their application was processed, renewable every six months) they were left on their own.[2]

The socialist government that came into power in November 2009 overhauled the

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[2] Greece had been under the spotlight because of its continuing inability to provide effective protection to asylum seekers arriving at its shores and having to be handled in Greek territory in line with the Dublin II regulation. Already on 31 January 2009, the European Commission had started infringement Proceedings with Greece because of its failure to implement the Dublin II regulation, bringing the country in front of the European Court of Justice. The infringement concerned mainly the fact that Greece lacked legal guarantees for a substantial examination of the application of asylum claimants. On 21 January 2011 the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) found that Greece's broken asylum system and appalling detention conditions meant that Belgium's transfer of an Afghan asylum seeker to Greece in 2009 under the Dublin II Regulation had breached the prohibition on ill-treatment and denied him an effective remedy (Triandafyllidou and Dimitriadi 2011).

backlog of asylum applications under the previous system and introduced Law 3907/2011 creating a new Asylum Service, an Appeals Committee and a First Reception Service. The old system had resulted in 45,000 unprocessed applications by the summer of 2013. The initial backlog was reduced to 5,000 cases by January 2014 and is likely to have been extinguished at the time of writing (June 2015) even if there have been important challenges in the processing of the backlog including in particular practical problems with notifying the applicants on time. The UNHCR Greece[3] has drawn attention to the risk that the rights of applicants' processed under the old backlog were not fully respected.

Table 4 Asylum seeking recognition rates, First instance, 2nd semester 2013

First Instance - Recognition Rates (In substance examination) June 2013-December 2013		
Refugee Status	229	11,0%
Subsidiary Protection	92	4,4%
Negative	1757	84,6%
Total	2078	100,0%

Note: Data provided upon request by the Asylum Service (August 2014)

Table 5 Asylum seeking recognition rates, First instance, Jan-Aug 2014

First Instance - Recognition Rates(In substance examination) January-June 2014		
Refugee Status	531	17,4%
Subsidiary Protection	232	7,6%
Negative	2294	75,0%
Total	3057	100,0

Note: Data provided upon request by the Asylum Service (August 2014)

Nonetheless, the change of asylum policy in Greece has led to a dramatic increase of recognition rates on both the old and the new asylum system rising from nearly null or 1% to an approval rate of between 15 and 25% in total (refugee status and subsidiary protection). The new asylum agency (the first asylum office started operating with a 2.5 year delay, on June 2013) is autonomous and decentralised (with several regional offices). First Reception Centres are being constructed in selected places. Where there is a notable inflow of immigrants, mobile units are deployed (the first of these centres started operating in March 2013 in the northeastern land border of Greece, near the Evros river). First reception centres receive irregular migrants upon their arrival and refer asylum seekers to the regional asylum office that (should) function within the local reception centre. The regional asylum offices as well as the asylum units (operating within pre-departure detention facilities and screening centres) are responsible for receiving and

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[3] For more details and an appraisal of the functioning of the new system as well as of the processing of the old system's backlog see https://www.unhcr.gr/fileadmin/Greece/Extras/WRD_2014/2014_PROTECTION_POSITIONS_GR.pdf last accessed on 27 April 2015.

processing the applications, conducting interviews, and issuing decisions at the first instance, within a time limit of 30 days.

Law 3907/2011 also implements two kinds of new permits for irregular migrants and asylum seekers: a formal toleration status for people who have been issued a return decision but cannot be returned to their country of origin, and a new type of permit for exceptional reasons that is given to irregular migrants who have been living in Greece for twelve years or more and in particular continuously for ten years before their application for such a permit. The same law also opens up the possibility of viable voluntary return for irregular migrants. When the migrant declares their will and a decision of voluntary return is issued, the new law allows the migrant to stay for a period of up to one year, so as to make voluntary return feasible for the migrant.

Alongside improvements in its asylum and irregular migration management policy, Greece improved its border controls and intensified internal controls. Indeed, the rising number of apprehensions generally indicates not only irregular migration or asylum seeking pressures at the borders of Greece (or the presence of irregular migrants within the country) but also the enforcement efforts of the authorities. Greece beefed up its border controls, adding 200 new officers in the Aegean sea in fall 2012. In addition FRONTEX has been operating in Greece since 2006 albeit with increasing intensity in the last couple of years. The joint operation POSEIDON has become now the largest FRONTEX operation in the Mediterranean and includes the first time ever deployment of FRONTEX's RABIT (Rapid Border Intervention Teams, 175 officers were sent to the Greek Turkish land border in late October and November 2010 and stayed there until March 2011), Project Attica which operates in the area of voluntary returns, and six long term stationed focal points.

In 2012, in response to pressures from the EU but also the continuous arrivals of irregular migrants, Greece further tightened border controls through Operation 'Shield' (*Aspida)* by sending 1,800 border guards to the region of Evros, concluded the building of a border fence across the 12.5 km used as the main entry point, increased passport controls and upgraded technologically the harbours of Patra and Igoumenitsa - main exit points to Italy (thus turning to better 'fencing' measures).

Operation Xenios Zeus was launched almost simultaneously with Operation Shield to exercise an analogous kind of control in the interior of Greece. On 16 July 2014, it was incorporated into the standard police procedures and patrols and renamed as 'Operation Theseus'. The previous operation, 'Xenios Zeus', named after the patron god of travelers in ancient Greece, had little public support. Operation Xenios Zeus comprised of a series of regular round-up operations carried out in areas with high concentration of irregular migrants, including street and house searches. It was an impressively large scale operation, both in terms of geographic coverage and intensity, including large urban centres on an almost daily basis. The controls performed were of a sweeping nature: every migrant who happened to be in the area of the operational activity was stopped and subjected to document checks, a procedure that could last several hours and would often take place in public. Asylum seekers and regular migrants were no exception.

A total of 65,000 were stopped from the beginning of the operation in August until 24 December 2012, out of whom only 4,128 were arrested for illegally staying in the country. The Operation was heavily criticised by the European Council for Refugees and

Exiles (ECRE Weekly Bulletin, 7 September 2012, available at www.ecre.org) for the risks it entailed for asylum seekers.

In the Attica region alone, Operation Xenios Zeus was first announced to have mobilized 2,000 officers.[4] Since the control of irregular migrants forms part of the regular duties of a police officer, costs were absorbed through the salaries of police officers and regular operational expenses of the Greek Police.[5]

Whether intercepted at the border or within the country, undocumented migrants and asylum seekers were routinely detained for shorter or longer periods. Detention has been and still is a hotly debated issue in Greece. The country was heavily criticized for its detention facilities on the islands[6], particularly in Lesvos. It has also been criticized for detaining asylum seekers[7], a practice which in 2012 not only continued but also was strengthened, through the modification of the Presidential Decree 114/2010 that enables the detention of asylum seekers for 12 months (rather than 3 and under special circumstances 6 months in place until then).

On 24 February 2014, the Greek Legal Council published Advisory Opinion no 44/2014, in which it held that it was legal for the Greek authorities to detain irregular migrants beyond eighteen (18) months – the maximum time allowed under Greek law – and prolong their detention indefinitely, until the latter consent to return to their home countries. The Opinion was initiated by a police query concerning the fate of 300 migrants out of a total number of 7,500 detainees, who were about to be released as their removal had not been carried out in time. According to the Council such a measure was justified by the need to prevent "a rapid increase in the number of irregular migrants in the country and its undesirable consequences in public order and safety" that the timely release of the 300 migrants as well as any future ones would "with certainty" cause. This would also serve the best interests of irregular migrants, "who are vulnerable people" and destitute, but can enjoy a dignified living inside the detention centre (sic).[8] Even though Advisory Opinions are not binding, the police authorities accepted this one unconditionally. At the same time, Greece was undertaking a significant financial investment in detention centres (for more see Angeli and Triandafyllidou 2014). The idea behind that policy was rather straightforward: faced with the prospect of indefinite stay inside a Greek detention centre – often under unacceptable conditions – irregular migrants would opt to return to their homelands. Once there, they would warn others and discourage new arrivals. The size of the migrant population would thus gradually shrink and this policy would help Greece

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4   See Greek Police, Press Release of 4 August 2012, available at
http://www.astynomia.gr/index.php?option=ozo_content&lang='..'&perform=view&id=18424&Itemid=950&lang=
5   See Minister of Citizen Protection, Parliamentary Reply of 20 September 2013, available at
http://www.hellenicparliament.gr/UserFiles/67715b2c-ec81-4f0c-ad6a-476a34d732bd/8202865.pdf ; See however also
Parliamentary Discussion of 22 October 2012, p.2934, during which, the then Minister of Citizen Protection mentioned
that Operation Xenios Zeus was co-financed by the European Refugee Fund available at
http://www.hellenicparliament.gr/UserFiles/a08fc2dd-61a9-4a83-b09a-09f4c564609d/es20121022.pdf
6 For the situation at Greek detention centers see ProAsyl (2007), Human Rights Watch (2008), Frontex (September 2011).
7 UNHCR (18 October 2012) 'Η κράτηση των αιτούντων άσυλο δεν πρέπει να αποτελεί γενικευμένη πρακτική αλλά
εξαιρετικό μέτρο' ('Detention of asylum seekers should not be the norm but the exception'), URL:
http://www.unhcr.gr/nea/artikel/b007e6faf3f8f128db0b7075b5aafe33/ypati-armosteia-i-k.html, 9/2/2013 *in Greek*.
8 Greek Council of State, Advisory Opinion No 44/2014, published on 24 February 2014, pp. 22-23.

reduce irregular arrivals of both asylum seekers and irregular migrants who might chose other points of entry to the EU or simply chose different migration strategies.

It is important to note that apprehension and temporary detention do not necessarily lead to effective expulsion/return for Asian and African immigrants, though significant steps have been taken to ensure returns (Dimitriadi 2013; Yousef 2013). Returns fall under three categories- forced expulsions, sometimes with police escort, voluntary returns, and assisted returns through the police. Albanian citizens apprehended by the Greek authorities are effectively expelled from the country; however things become difficult in relation to Asian and African nationals who have to first be identified, receive travel documents (this by extension requires cooperation with their respective embassies) and often apply for asylum-according to police data-as means of stalling the deportation order. Police data concerning 2014 for instance show that while 16,000 Albanians were apprehended for unlawfully entering Greece, approximately 10,000 were expelled to Albania; and while 3,600 Pakistani citizens were apprehended, a nearly equal number (3,563) were expelled. By contrast among people coming from war torn countries like Syria, Somalia, Eritrea or Iraq there were (fortunately) hardly any expulsions.

There are few returns of Afghans after apprehension. Between 2009 and 2013 a total of 5,181 Afghans were returned either through the Police and International Organisation for Migration (IOM) voluntary programs[9] or through forced returns by the Police.[10] The figure, when compared to the return numbers of Pakistanis (see table 6) which amount to a few thousands per year after 2011, is pretty low and with the exception of year 2012 has been consistently below 800 returns annually.

Table 6: Pakistani citizens apprehended and expelled (2009-2014)

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Apprehensions	4,854	8,830	19,975	11,136	3,982	3,269
Returns executed by the police, whether forced or voluntary (after apprehension)	245	405	1293	5135	4,833	3,287

Source: Maroufof (2015), data provided by the Hellenic Police, www.astynomia.gr

The new Greek government that took office at the end of January 2015 has clearly signalled its will to stop indiscriminate detention and has released asylum seekers and irregular migrants that had been detained for long periods. The government is putting emphasis on the increase of open reception facilities while also faced with the emergency of large numbers of arrivals in the islands. The vice minister for Immigration Affairs, Ms Christodoulopoulou has announced that asylum seekers will be distributed to different municipalities across the countries but the details of the policy are still to be worked out amid some protest from mayors.

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[9] These are separate return programs, and the total number does not include those returned voluntarily the Hellenic Police.

[10] Data provided upon request by the Directorate of Aliens Division, 23 July 2014.

It is against this background of a shifting geopolitical context, a tough border control policy, an initially non-functioning asylum system that has improved during the last two years, and a stark detain and expel policy that our case studies have to be analysed. Indeed irregular migrants and asylum seekers arriving in Greece have been faced with a complex environment of tolerance towards informal work as well as intensified public controls over residence status and an effort to deter irregular migrants and asylum seekers through frequent checks and expulsions. This policy landscape has been however intertwined with strong networks of smugglers particularly across Turkey and a highly segmented labour market where some jobs have dried out (notably construction or transport) but others (like caring and cleaning) have survived the economic crisis.

In the section that follows we present the overall research design of the project with a view of explaining the rationale of our comparative analysis that follows in section five.

3. Research Design

The empirical research undertaken in this project concentrates empirically on five case studies that can be classified as belonging to three migration corridors within which irregular migration is an important component of the flows: Balkans to the EU and notably the Albania-Greece corridor; Eastern Europe to the EU corridor, and in this particular case Georgian and Ukrainian irregular migration to Greece; and Southeast Asia to southern Europe corridor, notably Pakistani and Afghan irregular migration to Greece.

We have selected these five countries of origin because they are among the most important source countries of both legal but also and mostly irregular migration to Greece. Albania offers a control case where the authorities of the source and destination countries cooperate for the management of irregular migration. At the same time, and despite the settlement of the Albanian legal migrant population in Greece, there is a high number of irregular migrant apprehensions at the Greek Albanian border as explained in the previous section. Recent studies along with the IRMA fieldwork (Gemi 2015) also showed that there is still a significant number of Albanian workers that work without appropriate permits in Greece at temporary or seasonal jobs (Maroukis and Gemi 2011). Thus, Albanian irregular migrants are by definition an important group to study for Greece.

Pakistan and Afghanistan have been selected because citizens from these countries are among the most visible irregular migrants and have been at the centre of the so-called irregular migration 'crisis' in Greece in the period 2010-2012. These two countries are particularly important for studying the dynamics of globalisation and how transnational actors interfere with migrants' plans and state policies to shape irregular migration and condition the success or failure of state policies. Pakistan and Afghanistan have had no prior historical, political, cultural or economic links with Greece, although a small and tightly knit Pakistani community has been in Greece for about 30 years (Tonchev 2007, Triandafyllidou and Maroukis 2011; Lazarescu and Broersma 2010). Pakistani and Afghani immigration to Greece offers a good example of the globalisation of migration routes and the emergence of new migration destinations (see also Yousef 2013, and Dimitriadi 2013).

We have also selected as important source countries **Georgia and Ukraine** with a view to studying the irregular migration dynamics and the role of policies in the Eastern Europe to Greece migration system. Greece is among the top destinations for Georgians (see also Maroufof 2013). Georgian irregular migration has continued unabated in recent years and Georgians have also tried the asylum seeking pathway with a view to achieving at least temporarily some sort of legal migration status (through the temporary pink cards as asylum seekers). By contrast, Greece is a secondary destination for Ukrainians and actually the Ukrainian community has been decreasing in size in recent years. However, the war in eastern Ukraine during the last year and the Russian intervention has, on one hand, led to the halting of returns of undocumented Ukrainians to the Ukraine as well as opened the possibility for Ukrainians to apply for asylum at their EU destination countries.

Each country case study developed in parallel, starting with a period of desk research and fieldwork in Greece, interviewing stakeholders (state authorities, civil society actors, experts), and collecting relevant policy documents. At a second phase each researcher responsible for a case study conducted semi-structured qualitative interviews with irregular migrants in Greece while a third phase included interviews with returned irregular migrants or with people who considered leaving but did not depart. In the case of Pakistan and Afghanistan interviews were conducted via Skype with people in the countries of origin and also in Istanbul where many Pakistani and Afghani migrants and asylum seekers are in transit awaiting for a smugglers' passage to Greece. In the case of Ukraine, where war erupted during the planning of the fieldwork, the trip was eventually cancelled, but contacts were taken with local civil society organisations who conducted interviews and facilitated Skype contacts. Further interviews were conducted in all cases with people in detention or under voluntary return procedures with the IOM (for more details on the methodology see the case study reports: Dimitriadi 2015, Gemi 2015, Maroufof 2015a and 2015b and Nikolova 2015). This report is based on both the analysis of the interview materials (in total 61 interviews with stakeholders in Greece, 175 immigrants interviewed in Greece and 95 in the country of origin (or in the case of Afghans and Pakistanis also in Istanbul as they were in transit to Greece) and relevant literature as well as the case study reports provided by the main IRMA researchers (http://irma.eliamep.gr/publications/case-studies/).

Table 8: Interviews with Immigrants and Stakeholders

Case study \ no of interviews	Immigrants interviewed in country of origin	Stakeholders interviewed in country of origin	Immigrants interviewed in Greece	Stakeholders interviewed in Greece	Total
Albania	30	4	57	8	99
Georgia	19	6	30	11	66
Ukraine	13	3	28	6	50
Afghanistan	23	3	30	9	65
Pakistan	10		30	11	51
Total	95	16	175	45	**331**

4.Comparative Analysis

Studies of irregular migration often focus overwhelmingly on the unauthorised character of the movement and seeking to assess whether and how migration policies can stop or indeed limit irregular entry or stay (see for instance EMN 2012), somehow neglecting the agency behind the movement. This study puts the migrant centre-stage as the main agent of the journey. This is both an analytical and a methodological viewpoint. Indeed as Anderson (2008) argues the migrant is neither a victim nor a villain. S/he is an actor, that is embedded in a specific set socio-economic context. We conceive of the social, economic, and political circumstances of the migrant as the structural factors of the migration experience: The migrant is a citizen of a certain country. This limits her/his options of crossing international borders whether for employment, for family reunification or formation or indeed for seeking international protection. However the prospective migrant disposes of a certain level of resources; of human capital (education, skills), material capital (income, savings) and social capital (ethnic networks, kinship networks, contacts with smugglers, contacts with prospective employers, etc). These are crucial for both the motivation of the migrant – her/his decision to migrate and for the conversion of the motivation into action.

It is within this perspective that our analysis reconstructs the different phases of the migration project of the different groups/types of migrants coming from the five countries studied here and the ways in which they conceptualise their motivations, the means they chose to pursue their migration project and the role, within this, of the control policies of the destination country (notably Greece) as well as the role of the intermediaries that each time may act as catalysts in shaping the project, enabling the migrant to complete it, leading her/him to change it or indeed to abandon it if it proves impossible or indeed not fulfilling the migrant's needs and expectations. Our analysis is organised along four nodal points of the migrant's journey: what happens before leaving, turning the decision to

action, the first arrival, and the decision to move on or return. We largely bypass the distinction between legal and irregular migration as these are policy categories but do not appear to be relevant as "categories of analysis" for our migrant informants who actually make sense of the whole situation in terms of desires, needs, obstacles to overcome and objectives to achieve, and means or intermediaries through which to achieve them.

Below we first outline the background similarities and differences among our five chosen cases so as to place the analysis into its appropriate geopolitical and socio economic context before turning to the four nodal points' discussion.

4.1   Background situation

Irregular migration from Albania, Georgia and Ukraine to Greece is inscribed within the wider framework of economically motivated migrations of the post 1989 period from the former Communist countries to southern Europe. The starting point of these migrations is naturally 1991 and migration flows from Albania, Georgia and Ukraine to countries in southern and western or central Europe have been sustained through the 1990s as a result of economic crisis and rampant unemployment or underemployment. However our analysis here concentrates in the more recent period of the mid 2000s till today.

Indeed this period has been characterised by economic growth and a fragile political stability in Albania which has built closer links with the European Union and has been working on a path towards future membership. This path however was interrupted by the global financial crisis and the Eurozone crisis. Italy and Greece being the main economic partners as well as migration destinations for Albanians, the crisis in these two countries has had important repercussions for the Albanian economy and society. Approximately 140,000 Albanian citizens have returned to the country, of which a vast majority are men returning from Greece (approximately 70% of all) in the period 2009-2013 because of rampant unemployment in this last.

Greece has been a primary destination country for Georgians, partly because of cultural and religious affinities (both Greece and Georgia are Christian Orthodox countries) and because of indirect ties forged by the presence of a large Greek ethnic population in Georgia during the Communist times. While Georgia has been on a path of growth and political and economic stabilisation during the first decade of the century, this path was interrupted by the war with Russia in 2008 which had important negative repercussions in the economy and has led to a new wave of emigration as well as to Georgians leaving abroad attempting to apply for asylum because of the conflict in their country. Nonetheless the situation has stabilised in recent years and according to the National Statistical Office in Georgia the net migration rate was negative in 2012 and 2013 signalling that more people have been returning than leaving.

The case of Ukraine might be seen as similar to Georgia as Ukraine too was on a path of economic and political stabilisation and growth and had been forging (like Albania) closer links with the European Union, but this path was interrupted by the conflict in Eastern Ukraine in 2014 and the annexation of Crimea by Russia. While efforts to find a peaceful solution in Eastern Ukraine continue, these negative developments have affected both the situation of Ukrainians abroad (returns of undocumented Ukrainians from EU

countries have been halted because of war in this last) as well as are likely to motivate new emigration. It is important to note though that Western Ukraine which is the main area of origin of Ukrainian migrants to Greece and generally to the EU has been less affected by the conflict.

In short these three countries of origin share a Communist past and painful political and economic transition to a free market economy and a liberal democracy. Both processes are still in evolution and have gone through ups and downs which have had important repercussions in terms of migration trends. What is probably most important for our study is that all three countries have experienced a crisis of some sort in the last years: in Albania this was an economic crisis related to the overall Eurozone and global financial crisis, in Georgia and Ukraine the crisis was more political in nature (having to do with their pivotal role and difficult relation with both Russia and the EU), but obviously had negative consequences for economic growth and hence influenced emigration.

Turning now to the case of Pakistan and Afghanistan, these two countries of origin are inscribed in a completely different geopolitical and socio-economic context compared to Albania, Georgia and Ukraine. Afghanistan has been one of the major refugee source countries for the past 30 years, and has been tormented by war since the Soviet invasion in the 1980s. Afghans who come to Greece mainly seeking international protection but often not filing asylum claims (because they aim to move to another EU country) have usually spent a relatively long period (often 10 years or more) as refugees in Iran and are re-migrating because their lives in Iran have become harsher (as this last has changed its policy towards Afghans in the last 15 years, denying them documents and basic rights to education making their lives impossible).

Pakistan on the other hand is both a major refugee host country with huge camps hosting Afghani refugees along the Afghani Pakistani land border, and an important source country of economic migrants, including many highly skilled or family-related migrants headed to the UK and the USA. Other Pakistanis, including those with lower skills, go to new European destinations including Greece. Pakistani migration is not new to Greece, as the first groups arrived in the 1970s, but has been quite invisible until the 2000s when it grew in size becoming now the third largest group of non EU migrants in Greece after Albanians and Georgians.

The two flows, from Afghanistan and from Pakistan, are distinct in that the Afghani migration is mainly motivated by a lack of security and the search of both protection and a future in a third country while Pakistani migration has mainly economic motivations, and similar in that Greece is a new destination country with whom previous ties were limited (if existent at all). In other words, Greece emerges as a possible destination out of globalising migration networks and pathways. Nonetheless people from either group end up spending a number of years in the country, as asylum seekers or as labour migrants. Another interesting difference between the two groups that has emerged in the last few years of the acute economic crisis in Greece is that many Pakistanis participate in the voluntary return programmes organised by IOM and the Greek government – pushed by the lack of employment and the collapse of both the formal and informal economy in the country – while Afghans are seeking to move to Italy and/or other European countries through smuggling networks and do not consider returning to Afghanistan as an option.

While the five countries belong to three different migration corridors, we shall here reconstruct the migration project of the single migrants as one "project" with several common or different ramifications (in terms of motivations, opportunities, obstacles and intermediaries). The project is organised along four nodal points: First, the "before" the journey phase, notably the motivations that made the migrant consider leaving their home country and the information they have in relation to what awaits them at destination. Second, the phase in which the migrant turns the aspiration into action. In this part the intermediaries come in, as well as the awareness of the migrant that the project is unlawful and that there may be consequences because they travel without authorisation. A third nodal point concerns the first arrival and settlement, the ways in which the migrant navigates an initially unknown country without appropriate documents for residence or work. Here again the role of intermediaries comes into play as well as the information received from different sources on how to navigate a difficult environment without legal status. A fourth nodal point concerns the migrant's plans for the future and how migration control policies shape those, e.g. by making the life of the migrant impossible and future prospects in the destination country grim, or by opening up opportunities for further migration (e.g. in the case of Afghans seeking asylum in third countries) or for instance in terms of deciding to return either because the project has been fulfilled or because the migrant has been arrested and their project has been abruptly interrupted.

4.2   Before the Journey: Motivations

The migration project is initiated as a thought, a plan which later takes shape into concrete action because the (prospective) migrant has good reasons to leave their home. In our study, the motivations for migration were overwhelmingly economic for all groups except for the Afghans. The quotes in our interviews are quite similar and very eloquent for Albanians, Ukrainians and Georgians. There were no jobs and when working their salaries were not paid (in Ukraine) or were too low (in Georgia). Basic family needs could not be met:

> "Great need. At home none was working, not the husband, we have a boy, we have two grandchildren, our daughter in law, we decided that I go to Greece" (Georgian woman, aged 51, interviewed in Chiatura in May 2014)

> "Things were very difficult in our country in 1990. First of all wee would not receive our salaries (..) our salaries were often delayed. (..) Once my husband was paid in bricks. We had to find a truck, load the bricks, go to the market, sell them and get the money" (Ukrainian woman, currently returned to Ukraine, interviewed in Lviv in fall 2014)

The case of Albanians is slightly different in that while the motivation driving current irregular migration to Greece is the very low income and underemployment in Albania, thanks to the visa liberalisation for periods of up to 90 days, Albanian migrants

circulate between the two countries working in seasonal jobs, mostly informally, in Greece before returning. A young Albanian man currently working at the island of Rhodes says

> "I have done the trip more than six times on foot… once I was fined to 1,200 euro because Ihad exceeded my [legal] stay period in Greece. I did not pay. And now I cross the border like this, on foot. When I have no employment [here] I go back but generally there is work. Many Albanians come like this. They come because they need to work for five months and their passport only allows them for three"

The motivations of Pakistani migrants, in their most part young men, are quite similar:

> "we were three friends from a village, at night we sat there for company and we spoke of going to Greece. We may have a better life, to gather some money, to build some houses, what it is to make better life. And we came." (Pakistani man, aged 33, interviewed in Athens in February 2014)

The accounts of Afghan informants present a more mixed set of motivations. Insecurity and the lack of a future in Afghanistan and in Iran are a strong push factor along with motivations for finding employment and sending the children to school so that in the future they can have better employment:

> "We had documents and children could attend school, at first. But then things became very difficult, the children grew and we had no money for University so we thought to come to Europe" (Afghan woman in her late 30s, interviewed in Greece).

For some, motivations to leave had more to do with fear for their lives and for the lives of their children if members of their family had been collaborators of the Allied Forces and hence the whole family was now a target for the Taliban.

One element that is striking here is the migrants' apparent lack of consideration of the risks involved in the migration project. Indeed the pervasive certainty of poverty and insecurity appears to obscure initially the risk and uncertainty involved in the execution of the plans or even the feasibility calculation. As we shall see in the next section, uncertainty and risk come into the picture once the concrete planning occurs. This is important because it points to the need to separate the root causes of emigration or asylum seeking (that are structural and cannot be overturned through migration management policies) and the actual decision making of the migrant which is contextually based and dynamic.

There are two important points to highlight in our comparative analysis of the motivations of the migrants from the five countries. First, our study highlights the pervasiveness of the economic motivations for migration and the hope for both addressing immediate economic needs (literally feeding/clothing your children or grandchildren) and the plan of building a future, making an investment whether of material capital (buying property) or of human capital (getting an education, overall providing a better life for one's

self and for one's offspring). The motivation is the same regardless of the generation of the migrant who may be a middle aged Ukrainian woman sending money to adult children, a young Pakistani man sending money to his mother and siblings or indeed an Albanian man supporting his own family with small children.

Second, there is a difference in the accounts of the south-eastern and eastern European migrants (Albanians, Georgians and Ukrainians) and of the Afghans (who appear better informed not least because they are people with families who often have lived in Iran before and faced the difficulties there) and who appear more realistic as to what awaits them in Greece. The accounts of young Pakistani men (and occasionally of young Afghani men) confirm those of Bal (2014) with regard to young Bangladeshis, as they have a strong dream of going to Europe:

> "I see dreams, much money and care and good beautiful life (..) to gather money quickly and build a house, get a car, stuff like that (..) I was not thinking of anything specific only that was in my mind: I will go to Europe, I will live better" (Pakistani man, aged 28, interviewed in Athens in November 2013)

Recent research has shown that desires and motivations do not necessarily give way to concrete actions and while it is important to distinguish between general structural root causes of emigration and asylum seeking and specific individual or household motivations and needs, it is also important to distinguish between generic intentions and taking action. This is the second nodal point in our analysis discussed in the following section.

5.3 Turning Plans to Action

At a 2008 study by Gallup[11] on a representative adult population in the five continents, 16% of all adults (roughly equivalent to 700 million people) said they would like to move abroad if they had the opportunity. Percentages varied in different regions ranging from 28% in sub Saharan Africa, 23% in Middle East and North Africa, 19% in Europe, 18% in the Americas, and 10% in Asia. While percentages and motivations as well as desired destinations vary a lot between countries and continents, what also varies is whether this answer expresses a generic desire or a concrete plan that the person is seeking to put into action. Indeed a study by the EUImagine project showed that in Golf Sud region of Senegal 74% of people answered to a survey conducted in 2011-2012 that they would like to emigrate but only about 20% made any concrete preparations such as applying for a visa, applying to a University or even simply actively seeking information on employment opportunities at destination (Carling et al. 2013). The percentage was even smaller in the Orkadiere region where 82% said they wish to emigrate but approximately 10% made any concrete preparations for moving (Carling et al. 2013).

A recent study (Jayasuriya and McAuliffe 2015) based on a large survey among households in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka shows that migration

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[11] See http://www.gallup.com/poll/124028/700-million-worldwide-desire-migrate-permanently.aspx last accessed on 1 June 2015.

aspirations are also shaped by the legal or irregular nature of the prospective movement. Thus in that study between 83% (for non Rohingya informants) and 94% (for Rohingya informants) of all households interviewed would like to migrate with a visa, Hazara Afghans and Rohingya were the least likely to seek options for legal migration (only 2% of respondents). This suggests that the people interviewed considered not only the desirability of the migration plan (legal, with a visa vs unlawful) but also the probability for them to migrate legally, which obviously they considered as absolutely remote. Indeed this points to the complex interplay between aspiration, capability and information.

We conceptualise the relationship between agency and structure by distinguishing between the capability of a person to move/migrate and her/his aspiration to do so (Carling 2001, De Haas 2010). Paraphrasing de Haas, we consider the *mobility capability* of the person looking at the social, human and material capital that s/he is able to mobilise in order to move. The *mobility aspiration* concerns the preference of a person to move. Indeed, preferences for mobility are not constant. We need to consider how aspirations to move are related to exogenous structural factors such as education or income, as well as how they are related to subjective factors: not all people will react in the same way to a given situation or stimulus (whether this may be a negative stimulus like unemployment or poverty or a positive one, notably the opportunity to pursue further education or a travelling experience). Kaufmann et al (2010) actually coined the term **motility,** defined as "those factors that allow one to be mobile in space: physical capacity, financial means, aspirations towards sedentary or mobile ways of life, technical systems of transport and telecommunication, along with their accessibility, acquired skills for professional training, driving license, international English for travel etc." (Kauffmann et al. 2010: 95).

Indeed there has been a growing recent literature investigating the relationship between migration desires or intentions and their structural determinants (Creighton 2013; Docquier *et al.* 2014). Research on Afghanistan particularly points to the importance of household vulnerability as a determinant, an issue that is mirrored in our own research in relation to feelings of overall insecurity and no future (Loschmann and Siegel 2014). Ethnographic accounts have pointed to the processes through which migration dreams expressed in discourse take shape and how they should better be conceptualised as a process of transformation of the migrant (Bal 2014; Mains 2011; Matlon 2014). In other words migration is not only a spatial movement but a more holistic experience that changes the migrant's perception of who s/he is not only of where s/he is.

A crucial step in turning one's migration aspiration to capability (Carling 2014, Czaika and Votknecht 2014, Czaika and de Haas 2011) is gathering information about the destination and the opportunities it offers to satisfy the migrant's needs and wishes as well as to how to organise the journey. This is what Kahneman and Thaler (2006) call the anchoring of the decision to turn into action: they first evaluate the prospects that await them at destination and then they evaluate the hurdles to overcome in emigrating so as to arrive at an overall risk and gain calculation.

Williams and Balaz (2012) make a number of important points about risk and uncertainty in relation to migration which help us understand better the process of migrants' decision making. First of all they point out that "migration should be understood as being associated with expectations about risk formed under conditions of partial

knowledge" (Williams and Balaz 2012: 169). Indeed migrants move along a continuum between knowledge and uncertainty which they navigate on the basis of limited knowledge and their own personal interpretations of the available knowledge. Their risk perception may be lower than what we expect because they do not have such a high expectation (as is the case in western post-industrial societies) that they can control things (see the discussion of Beck, 1992 in Williams and Balaz 2012: 173-4). Indeed we need a socio-culturally informed understanding of risk which takes into account not just individual cognition but the cultural background of the individual (see Zinn and Taylor-Gooby 2006 and Mary Douglas' seminal work, 1992). Our account of how different groups of migrants turn their plans to action distinguishes between the southeast Asian corridor where smugglers are a crucial part of the process, and the Eastern European and Balkan corridor where visa policies and other strategies are used.

Afghans and Pakistanis: Unlawful crossing and the role of the smuggler

Among our informants in this study, the sources of information about the destination country and what awaits them there are common – relatives and friends who had already emigrated and a sense of general common knowledge of the kind "everybody knows that" – the type of information that each nationality has differs.

Thus in the case of Afghans and Pakistanis there is a general information about what happens in "Europe" as well as some more specific information coming from direct relatives (who often are those who funded the journey) as to employment opportunities (or the lack thereof). But the information remains quite generic about the opportunity of finding employment that would be well paid or at least paid much better than what they earned at home and would allow them to plan ahead in their lives and achieve something.

For Pakistanis and Afghans, information about opportunities to migrate comes along with information about smugglers. The two are nearly inseparable:

> "It was a friend of his who did this job, who brings person to Greece. He spoke with him and as everyone else came, he entered Iran with a visa, from there Turkey. Everyone who comes here until Iran they have a visa. In Turkey they also give visa but in Turkey to get a visa wants more money and they do not get a visa, they are smuggled" (Pakistani man, aged 28, interviewed in Athens in September 2014).

> "yeah of course [I crossed] with a smuggler. It is not easy to come alone" (Afghani man, mid 20s, interviewed in Greece)

It is clear that in line with Jayasuriya and McAuliffe's findings (2015) our informants use the available information to navigate the options that are available to them for emigrating. Interestingly the uncertainty involved in the journey and the "illegal" character of the movement are inextricably intertwined, while the smuggler emerges as a key figure that brings the two together.

Given the difficulty, length and risks associated with the journey, this last occupies an important part of the narrative and the role of the smuggler in making the project

happen becomes one of paramount importance. The smuggler is an intermediary, a means to achieve an end, notably get to the desired destination. There is also actually a certain conflation between the "friend" generically speaking with whom they inquired to organise the journey and eventually the smuggler, the professional so to speak who organised the complex and risky journey. The importance of the friend actually fades away in the crossing and only the smuggler is important. Paying the money is of course also a big issue. Most informants from Pakistan had to sell family property to cover the fees while in the case of Afghans, informants come from upper middle class families apparently: "… my family wealthy. They sent some money to my uncle" (Afghan man, mid 20s, interviewed in Greece).

The migrants are aware that smugglers are criminals although opinions of whether they can be trusted or not differ among our informants (for more see Dimitriadi 2015: pp. 10-11), but this does not trigger a reflection about migration control policies or the unlawful character of the whole project. To put it simply the migrant does not consider her/himself as a criminal, as a person violating the law. This is what Ruhs and Anderson (2010) also label "the law in the mind". It somehow does not cross her/his mind as s/he is focused on achieving the goal, getting to destination and building a better life or indeed fleeing insecurity and war. The unlawful crossing is only part of the "how" to get there and remains detached from the motivations and/or a sense of the migrant that her project is a legitimate one (building a better life).

This finding is particularly important as receiving country policy approaches focus predominantly on a net distinction between legal and irregular migration presuming migrants also adopt this frame of mind in their planning of their migration project. Indeed as we shall see in this report the undocumented status and its many disadvantages and problems hits the migrant but only later in the project, when s/he considers her/his future (more on this in section 5.4 below) as an illegal resident.

Georgians, Ukrainians and Albanians: Obtaining a Visa to navigate Uncertainty

Georgians and Ukrainians had more concrete information. They are aware that they need a travel/tourism visa that they can apply for at the Greek consulate. In many cases such visas were issued through the normal, legal path to Georgians who were invited by relatives or friends who were already in Greece. However at least half of the Georgians interviewed used the services of a travel agent who acted as a go-between and had the visa issued, upon the payment of fees (part of which presumably went to the employees of the consulate). That was also the case among Ukrainians during the 1990s, where such travel agencies apparently flourished. Today information diffusion has improved in Ukraine (Nikolova 2015) as a lot of information is available through the internet and through for instance a phone line that is available to provide information on requirements to migrate abroad.

Alongside the issuing of visas directly through the consulate or with the mediation of travel agencies, Georgian informants who did not have enough money to pay for the mediation fees travelled with the help of travel agencies that organised trips for undocumented people crossing from Georgia to Turkey (no need for visa) and then onwards to Greece, either by bus (upon paying a fee to the local smugglers recommended

by the initial "travel agency" contact in Georgia) or simply crossing the Greek Turkish land border on foot.

> "I live in a small provincial town, I do not live in Tbilisi, I was studying here and then decided to go to Greece. I came here to do my visa and my documents to go to Greece legally [i.e. with a tourism visa]. But it so happened that they put me in the bus and I came unlawfully to the country, without realising it" (Georgian woman, aged 36, interviewed in Tbilisi in May 2014)

Thus while obtaining visas is a focal point for both Georgians and Ukrainians, people from the two groups navigate this obstacle in different ways. Ukrainians pay some semi-legal intermediary who organises the issuing of travel visas for tourism while Georgians use a mixture of strategies ranging from simply crossing undocumented, to having a "travel agency" organise the journey and the visa to indeed obtaining a legal tourism visa through invitation by relatives. Paraphrasing Van der Hear (2014) our informants did not go as far as their money would take them but through the path that their money could buy. This points to an important actually qualification in Van der Hear's very interesting arguments about the role of class and of different types of capital (social, cultural, economic) that an individual can mobilise to support their journey. Such capital conditions not only where but also how one gets to a desired destination.

What is common in our informants' narratives is a relatively detailed and relatively accurate knowledge of what is needed and whether it is possible to obtain it legally or not. Interestingly none reflects on the fact that the visa is for tourism purposes while they wish to go there to get employment and stay longer. Hence here again the interplay between what is legal and what is not is quite fuzzy and if anything not particularly relevant for the prospective migrant. What matters is to get to destination.

Also a crucial point is the role of the close contact, the relative that is already in Greece:

> "Here [in Greece] my cousin was waiting for me. She came [to meet me] as she knew I was coming so as to pay, she had money, I did not" (Georgian woman, aged 46, interviewed in Athens in November 2013)

Albanians are better informed. One might argue that information about possibilities and obstacles for going to Greece for work is quite diffuse. They take their information from direct relatives or friends who either live in Greece or engage into the same type of informal circularity and employment. And many people have prior experience of migration to Greece. A nodal point here is the visa facilitation since December 2010. Our informants are aware of both entry restrictions and the fact that their 90-day stay is normally for tourism or leisure purposes and does not allow to work but this does not seem to be relevant. What is relevant is crossing the border lawfully. Indeed the biometric passports and the visa facilitation have changed the nature of the flows:

"Younger people come now, who work in the fields or in construction, seasonally. I bring more people in spring or fall" (Smuggler, mid-50s, interviewed in Athens)

They need to work and they need to circumvent the rules. Thus one way of doing this is to simply cross the border on foot or as another informant notes through petty bribing of border guards:

"My brother lives in Ithaca [an Ionian island, western Greece]. He sends his passport with some money to be stamped at the border every three months" (young Albanian man, late 20s, interviewed in Athens).

The findings of this study reinforce the point made already ten years ago by Krissman (2005) with regard to Mexican irregular migration in the USA. Along with ethnic migrant networks with strong local roots and chain migration effects as outlined in Massey and his collaborators in their seminal work on Mexican immigration to the USA, our understanding of irregular migration needs to take into account as part and parcel of the migration networks employers, smugglers, foremen (gangmasters), other business actors (e.g. landlords), state officials like border guards or consular employees. The emphasis however should remain on these actors as intermediaries between the agency of the migrant and the structural factors, going beyond a notion of migration industry or a migration infrastructure (Xiang and Lindquist 2014). The emphasis on the network and the different intermediaries within it highlights the dynamic nature of the migration process as well as its social nature. As Triandafyllidou and Maroukis (2012) have argued with regard to migrant smuggling, our understanding of the whole process of irregular migration should be conceptualised as a social process that is not merely guided by profit but involves different types of social relations.

Comparing our five cases several differences emerge clearly. First, for irregular migrants coming from south Asia, the journey is long, dangerous and costly and using the services of the smuggler is a sine qua non. While they are aware that smugglers are criminals, migrants do not conceptualise themselves as criminals. Their focus is on their migration project and their need to migrate. This is also the case of Georgians, Ukrainians or Albanians: while they realise that the bogus travel agent or the petty smuggler that organises the border crossings is a criminal, it does not occur to them that they are engaged in an unlawful activity too. This only becomes relevant when they face a dangerous crossing at night but not as regards their overall migration project.

For all groups a close contact at destination usually a relative or a close friend can be crucial in both providing the money and becoming the reference point to whom the migrant turns to upon arrival. Often this close contact is the source of most information on the conditions (and employment opportunities) at destination and the organisation of the journey. However particularly in the case of Ukrainians or Pakistanis there was not always a close contact but rather a diffuse network or some information on what to do, where to go, once at destination, to get in touch with relevant migrant networks and find employment.

Both fencing (border controls) and gatekeeping (visa) policies are for the migrants hurdles to overcome in order to begin their migration project. Smugglers, whether they appear as seemingly lawful agencies or as more spooky informal contacts with specific persons who make arrangements and take the money, are seen as important contacts that make the project possible. There may be fear, particularly in the case of Pakistanis and Afghans, and dependence upon the smugglers as well as awareness that they are criminals and can be ruthless and that they are mostly interested in their profit, but they are somehow seen as important actors enabling them to travel. Interestingly consular authorities or generally authorities at the destination country do not appear much in the narratives as important actors or factors. Visa policies are important mediating factors in the passage from aspiration to action in irregular migration albeit in ways that are initially unforeseen by the policy makers. Thus obtaining a tourism visa is an important factor for managing knowledge and uncertainty among Georgian and Ukrainian prospective irregular migrants to Greece.

Our analysis of how the migrant intention turns into action highlights the central role of the migrant as a social actor who responds to an important need and desire to emigrate. The migrant does not consider the overall project in terms of legal or illegal but rather assesses the options available to her/him at a particularly point in time and navigates uncertainty mainly through actively seeking information from different sources and navigating uncertainty with fear as well as determination. The migrant appears to perceive risk as an integral part of the project and rather focuses on how to make choices with limited information and with limited resources. Overall the agency of the migrant and their capacity to mobilise different types of capital (whether financial, social or cultural) is central to the process where policies become just an intermediary factor along with smugglers or semi-legal actors such as travel agencies or employers or corrupt officials. These observations are crucial to our analysis of the next nodal point of the irregular migrant's journey, notably the moment when the irregular migrant arrives at destination, in Greece, and they have to navigate an unknown and potentially hostile environment.

5.4 Navigating a new environment without legal status

One major concern for all irregular migrants is to avoid apprehension and/or detention, and/or if possible to find ways to obtain legal status. A second concern is to secure a job and accommodation. However these concerns affect different groups of migrants in different ways: physical appearance, as we shall explain below, plays an important part with regard to the fear of apprehension and/or detention. It is actually more important than networks and local contacts. By contrast, options for regularising and securing accommodation and a job are issues that deepen mostly upon the migrant's social capital, notably contacts with employment agencies, fellow nationals and natives that help the migrant navigate the legal regulations and find work. The paragraphs below discuss each of these concerns separately.

Fearing Apprehension and Detention and Seeking to Manage Risk

Fencing policies both at the borders and within the country have intensified in Greece since 2007 and particularly so since 2010. Operation Xenios Zeus was launched in 2012 and has by now been integrated into normal police practices. Sweeping internal controls at public places where all people looking foreign are checked for their papers are combined with, until recently, long periods of detention for both irregular migrants and asylum seekers. Indeed as argued by Angeli, Triandafyllidou and Dimitriadi (2014) detention has been used in Greece as a standard practice for all people apprehended and actually the aim of Greek governments until early 2015 was to use it as a deterrence strategy. The aim has been to spread the word of mouth among migrant and smuggling networks that the situation in Greece is bad as you are likely to be checked and detained in rather appalling conditions so that migrants aiming at a country farther north and west in Europe, would seek to avoid the route that passes from Greece.

Migrants from different nationalities navigate this high risk environment differently. Indeed phenotype and stereotypical images of who looks like a migrant play here an important part as migrants are aware of the Greek police practices of ethnic profiling and of whether they themselves look "foreign" / like "migrants", or not. Thus our Georgian and Ukrainian informants, particularly middle-aged women, are not afraid of internal fencing strategies of the Greek authorities:

"I thought about it [that police might stop me for control] but they did not stop me, not sure why? [she laughs] I do not look like those black [men], I look a little like Greeks, Russians…" (Georgian man, aged 52, interviewed in Athens in January 2014)

"I am not a young girl [she laughs], apologies for saying this but I never had a problem. Never. I go my way, calmly, and I never have a problem. Sometimes it has happened that police were standing by and checking but if I do nothing wrong, I just walk, then they never even questioned me" (Georgian woman, aged 50, interviewed in Athens in September 2013)

Albanians, on the other hand, particularly young men, are aware of being a target but because of the close proximity of the country and the relative ease of crossing the border they ignore the controls or just live with the hassle:

"I've been turned back several times, and I've used a lawyer many times as well. And I've been handed an expulsion order. They'd keep us for one or two weeks in the detention centres of the area where I was caught. I'd go to Albania, and I'd come back. I was caught by the police and I went with an extradition. I went back home where I stayed for a week and then I went back to Greece. I went the same way as many other people. I now know this route inside out. I was in Athens again four days ago. In the same place, for the same work" (Albanian man, aged 27, interviewed in Athens in 2013).

"I've done it over six times by foot... Once I was handed a fine of 1,200 euro because I'd overstayed my time in Greece. I didn't pay. And now I just cross the borders like that, by foot. When there is no work I leave, but there usually is. Many Albanians travel like this. They come because they may want to work for five months and their passport only allows them to do it for three" (Albanian man, aged 34, interviewed in Rhodes in 2014).

Actually it appears that the routine process of arrest-detain-deport of Albanian irregular migrant workers has led the migrants to develop the necessary knowledge so that they have detailed information of the process and strategies to deal with it. They learn how to cross the border on foot and taking advantage of the visa liberalisation as of December 2010, they move nearly freely between Albania and Greece as employment opportunities require. Indeed it is somehow the banality of the internal control and sending back that undermines its efficacy: the migrant develops the necessary know-how and contacts to go back to Greece after a few days or weeks.

The case of Asian migrants that look phenotypically different from Greeks or other Southeastern and Eastern Europeans is entirely different however. The internal controls follow a clear ethnic profiling logic: Pakistani and Afghan migrants know that they look "foreign" and will be stopped at such random checkpoints.

Afghans are particularly well informed of how internal controls have intensified and returns are taking place and are particularly concerned:

"Before, it was ok to be without papers but now if you don't have documents they send you back. They arrested and sent to Athens three months ago 45 people-Albanians, Afghans and Pakistanis-everyone was returned. They are back in Afghanistan!" (young man from Afghanistan, aged 23, interviewed in Athens in 2014)

In response to this high risk, migrants seek additional information to improve their strategies for avoiding detention and particularly avoiding return:

"No you see my fingerprints are only on paper. They don't have them anywhere. But in Katehaki they take them with laser [biometrics]. Paper you don't see. Laser you do." (man from Afghanistan, aged 27, interviewed in Athens in 2014)

The informant in question refers to fingerprinting that is inserted in the EURODAC database for asylum seekers, which means that if he later moves on to another EU country and files an application there, they would find him in the system and return him there.

Looking at how migrants navigate risk and uncertainty as well as how they perceive their undocumented status, there are several findings that are common. First, migrants seek to obtain additional and more accurate information from fellow nationals or smugglers so that they know what awaits them and so that they can develop strategies for fencing themselves against apprehension and detention or indeed also return to the country of origin. These may range from behaving calmly as our Georgian informant notes,

to crossing the border again as our young Albanian informants, or to seeking to avoid apprehension as well as avoid full identification.

Thus, two young Pakistani informants interviewed in September 2013 noted that while in early 2012 they were more relaxed, after sweeping controls in public places started with Operation Xenios Zeus they started staying at home for the fear of being caught and detained for long periods

"Ï do not walk around much. Only [to] work.." (Pakistani man, aged 25, interviewed in Athens in September 2013).

"I have been caught many times by the police. They let me go. (..) Two-three hours, then leave. (..) Now they catch, if they catch, 16 months is in. A year ago they caught me every day and let (me) go. Now they haven't caught me" (Pakistani man, aged 17, interviewed in Athens in September 2013).

However, despite the perception of relatively harsh repression and long detention, the legal or irregular nature of their stay is truly secondary and experienced as a befallen evil, certainly not a crime:

"And if they arrested and detained me, what would they tell me: what have you done? I have done nothing [wrong]. They will give me a deportation paper, isn't it? They can do nothing else [to me]. That is why I am not afraid" (Georgian man, aged 31, interviewed in Athens in February 2014)

"look at me in here, I am not a criminal and look where they keep me? Ok I am illegal, I have no papers but I am not a criminal. Ahead is better. Ok I am illegal but here everything is closed. They open the doors twice a day. It is not like this there[Europe]…there you can at least walk outside" (Afghan man, aged 18, interviewed in Athens at the Amygdaleza detention centre, in 2014)

It is clear that our informants develop a certain risk resilience during their journey through obtaining more information about what can happen to them. Knowing makes them feel in control even if being apprehended would mean the end of their migration project; they would be returned to their country of origin. This is a psychological strategy to deal with uncertainty by creating an emotional certainty through knowing the possible negative outcomes. Overall intensive internal controls deteriorate the life of the migrants making them stay at home and do not go out in public places, as well as adding a lot of emotional stress but they are dealt with as one factor among many in terms of their migration project. Our findings corroborate those of an earlier paper on irregular migrants in California dealing with intensified internal controls (Garni and Miller 2008). The role of this stress and fear in terms of the overall migration project planning is further discussed in the next section where we focus on how and when the migrant decides to move on or head back.

Assessing one's Options: is Legal Status Within Reach?

All informants from Albania, Georgia and Ukraine had detailed information about the last regularisation programme that was enacted in Greece in 2005 and of the papers that were requested. Several had tried to regularise their position but were aware that they did not fulfil some requirement. They are actively seeking information through ethnic networks as well as ethnic Press, television. Many were also aware of the recent changes in the law and the possibility to apply for regularisation for humanitarian reasons of one has lived in Greece for at least ten years and has also spent some period legally in the country. What is most interesting is the conscious weighing of the advantages and disadvantages of seeking legal status, notably the financial costs involved and the 'usefulness' of such a status for the migrant's future plans. Indeed it is not so much the availability of regularisation options as the living and employment conditions of the migrant, their overall migration project, and the degrees of exposure to risk that they experience. Controls and detention do not affect all migrants in the same way: what we have found in our case studies is that different migrants assess the costs and benefits of regularising differently.

Thus some migrants who have been legal before, but lost their status because of the impossibility to prove employment and pay their welfare insurance, are reluctant to seek regularisation and entail the costs:

"For eight years I had papers. But the last four years I am not paying [welfare stamps]. Because they are not going to give us a pension, and I do not want, I do not have money to throw away"(Ukrainian woman, aged 58, interviewed in Athens in November 2013)

"I started [paying welfare] for the first time in 2000 if I remember correctly. But after that they [the employers] were not paying the insurance so my insurance was interrupted. I have always been working as a live-in, and my bosses did not want to pay for welfare. And if I paid for it from my salary, then I would be left with just 400 Euro per month [so I did not do it]" (Ukrainian woman, aged 65, interviewed in Athens in November 2013)

"The law had been issued that year, when I arrived, in 2004 (..) but because there was none to guide me, to grasp the opportunity, to arrange my papers, (..) I stayed [undocumented]. And all these years I have been undocumented. Well I could also arrange them now, you can do it if you pay [for welfare stamps] but I never tried" (Georgian woman, aged 30, interviewed in Athens in February 2014)

The last interviewee does not seem to have full information as to whether she can regularise her position and makes an overall assessment judging from the fact that she has lived in Greece for ten years without papers and without having been apprehended or detained and taking into account the cost that welfare insurance entails as often employers (particularly of domestic workers) are not willing to pay and leave it up to the employee to decide and sort out the paper work.

The informants who make this assessment of costs vs benefits are all domestic workers, some of them live-in maids, women and with a European phenotype so they can afford a sophisticated assessment of the risk and costs involved. They perceive the risk of being apprehended as low while they need all the money they can earn. The situation is different not only for Asian men but also for Albanians particularly men who work in construction or agriculture or tourism and catering. There the fear of apprehension is higher and the feeling of not being legal isa big stress factor as they realise that it severely curtails their employment opportunities and overall their future prospects in Greece.

Albanian informants showed a detailed knowledge of their rights which translated into checking all options for keeping/regaining their legal status:

"I lost it last year. I was missing two work stamps and they wouldn't do them for me. I have three small children born in Greece. I'd submitted the application in October and 11 months later, September this year, they told me that my papers couldn't be renewed because I was missing two work stamps. I called a lawyer and I went to court and they gave me a special confirmation until the trial was held" (Albanian man, aged 40, interviewed in the island of Rhodes, in 2014).

"I lost my papers two years ago. I was without insurance for a while. In the summer I work for six to seven months, when the wages are lower and life is expensive. In the winter it's very difficult. I've now found a job with work stamps in a construction company and they can't hire me because I don't have a permit. They won't take me for informal work and that means I have a serious problem. That I haven't been there, or anything. And at IKA I went to buy the work stamps but they won't accept" (Albanian man, aged 36, interviewed in Athens in 2014).

This strategy however did not work for Pakistani immigrants who lacked the necessary human and social capital as they do not speak Greek and do not have a network of contact to rely on. Thus a young Pakistani man who had been in Greece for 9 years, some of which with legal status, interviewed while in detention at Amygdaleza in Athens in January 2014, noted that he had been cheated by several lawyers who promised to get him out of detention and help him either get a pink card (for asylum seekers whose application is pending) or some other sort of legal status:

"In order not to lose my job and not to return back, as I learned that they would force me to return (if he got caught), I went to a lawyer in Corfu, he took me a thousand euros, he did nothing. Then a girl lawyer, she took from me 450 euros, nothing, then, while I was here, in Amygdaleza, I spoke with a lawyer, he told me 1,200 euros, we gave him 700, and he took it all from us doing nothing at the end. You know" (Pakistani man, aged 27, interviewed in Athens in January 2014).

This account was confirmed by several Pakistani informants pointing to the importance of not only human capital (notably knowledge of the law) but also social capital, notably trusted networks of lawyers and co-ethnic who would provide support.

Albanian women who are employed as domestic workers and who used these jobs to obtain their legal status through the spouse's permit, find themselves and their entire family caught in a trap of illegality because of the husband's unemployment and the employer's unwillingness to pay welfare stamps. They are aware of recent changes in legislation and the need to be paid through domestic work stamps in order to prove employment and renew their residence status:

> "My husband is unemployed for two years. His residence permit expired last year, like mine. He went to renew it but he had no work stamps or income for me to secure a permit. We were told to consult a lawyer but we had no money and so we let it be. And I can't do anything either because now it's not like in the old days where you put as many work stamps as you liked as long as you paid for them, now your employer must go to the bank to declare the hours you work and acquire them on their own" (Albanian woman, aged 46, interviewed in Athens in 2014).

In this calculation of the costs and benefits and the probability of actually achieving or regaining legal status, employers are crucial intermediaries. Their assistance with dealing with the paper work and their willingness to fulfil their obligations in terms of welfare insurance is crucial. The same is true with regard to lawyers and other contacts that can provide reliable and accurate information and help.

While it is often assumed that migration controls and opportunities for regularisation may affect all undocumented migrants in similar ways (e.g. discouraging them from staying on or encouraging them to legalise their status), our study shows that these policies affect migrants very differently, and the overall aim of their migration project (whether for instance to continue working as live-in maid and send as much money as possible back home, or to move on to a third country as asylum seeker, or indeed to settle down in Greece with one's family) determines the ways in which migrants navigate the complex regulatory environment.

This brings us to the third issue that the undocumented migrant faces at destination notably to secure a job and accommodation.

Securing a Job and Accommodation

Social and human capital is of paramount importance in navigating the host country environment: network contacts, speaking the language, and knowledge of the country make a big difference in the migrant's prospects to secure good employment. Albanians who have the highest such capital appear to be very dynamic entrepreneurs of their own labour force:

> "It all starts from personal contacts. I know such and such employer who asks for workers for a particular job and I offer my own. That's how it goes…" (Albanian man, aged 55, interviewed in Athens, in 2014)

"There's a place where you can work everywhere: construction, taverns, hotels... there's work in the fields. (..) So many come and work for one season, three months. The young ones come more for seasonal work. They already know the employer and they might work for three months without stamps or social security, and the employers usually bribe the IKA agency" (Albanian man, aged 30, interviewed in Rhodes, in 2014).

While both Albanians and Pakistanis respond to a dynamic informal labour market that needs seasonal and cheap labour, the latter could only trust close friends who initially actually put them up and provided for clothes and food, while those who did not have such relatives or close acquaintances and trusted the smuggling networks, ended up being cheated and severely exploited:

"The one who brought, the agent, stayed with his brother and he send him to a village to work over there, to collect fruit. (...)There where he worked he tells the supervisor that was over there, to take 5 Euros to make a phone call to my family to tell them I am all right, I have arrived, I don't know, and he says we don't give money, we give food and only to work. There isn't, there isn't money." (Pakistani man, aged 19, interviewed in Athens in November 2013)

For Albanians the visa liberalisation has added great potential as they can make use of their contacts and networks to find employment without the fear of being stopped at the border, since they travel as tourists. Of course their work remains irregular but this has greatly facilitated their search for gainful employment.

"Greece is very close. Everyone told me there is lots of work. When I came here I found work immediately. And if I had no work I could go back whenever I wished without paying or risking my life" (Albanian man, aged 35, interviewed in Rhodes).

"The three-month visas came out and I came to see how it is and to work with my sister-in-law on the island" (Albanian woman, aged 19, interviewed in Athens).

The accounts of Ukrainian and Georgian undocumented migrants also confirm the importance of networks and show however that social capital, when not available upon arrival, can be developed by the migrant workers. Thus a Ukrainian middle aged woman reported:

"Ïn the beginning they would find work for us from the agency, but later we met people and could arrange work by ourselves" (Ukrainian woman, aged 58, interviewed in Athens in December 2013).

The accounts of our informants corroborate not only the important role of the migrant's agency in navigating the new country's environment but also the role of networks, which include not only fellow nationals and informal employment agencies or

smugglers but also most importantly employers in search of cheap and flexible labour force. Indeed semi-compliance as in the case of Albanians who may travel as tourists but engage into work, or full irregularity are typical of a labour market in search of flexible labour for poorly paid temporary jobs (see also Ruhs and Anderson 2010). Within this offer and demand context, migration policy appears less relevant, particularly if the apprehension risk is mitigated by working within a private home or simply by avoiding walking around too much and exposing one's self to the risk of being checked. Labour market dynamics that meet the wishes and needs of the migrants are central to irregular migration management while fencing or gatekeeping policies are bended (whether they are used, as happens with the visa liberalisation, or they are bypassed, as regards the overall migration control) by the migrants, with of course the crucial assistance of both employers and intermediaries, whether these are illegal smuggling networks or legal employment and travel agencies.

5.5 Returning or Moving on: Undocumented Status as a Trap

Undocumented status as such entails a fear of being apprehended and expelled thus leading to the violent interruption of one's migration project (see also Cassarino 2004). However, undocumented status can itself be felt as a trap within which the migrant has fallen and which prevents them from moving on or moving back. Moving on is not possible because they have no papers, improving their current living and working situation is not an option either because they cannot negotiate a better condition, and going back would be too radical a change as they would not be able to return, were the situation in the home country proven to be unsustainable. In addition as several informants note moving back without having at least repaid the debts incurred for their migration in the first place is also not a feasible option.

Those informants from Georgia and Ukraine who were least concerned about their undocumented status (as they were live-in domestic workers, they did not look "foreign" and hence felt they faced a rather small risk of being apprehended), are also those who express most strongly their feeling of being trapped in this phase of their lives unable to move forward or to return to their previous lives, or to somehow reclaim the years they feel they have lost:

> "There is no possibility for improvement here. I cannot do what I want, what I like. I have to press myself to do jobs that I do not like. My expectations were higher than what the situation is here." (Ukrainian woman, aged 27, interviewed in Athens in November 2013)

> "I decided [to return] because I did not have papers and waiting, waiting many years have passed and I could not move forward. I could not have a proper job, my family was there but this was not enough because I was undocumented, that bothered me a lot. That is why I decided to come back. I have not regretted it. Even though I was unemployed for a year and it was a little difficult (..) because when you

go here and you go there, it is difficult to move on with your life." (Georgian woman, aged 36, interviewed in Tbilisi, in May 2014).

Undocumented status is an important factor of feeling trapped, feeling that one's life has stopped, is not moving, and for taking the decision to return. Paradoxically it is not the fear of being apprehended or expelled but rather the realisation that undocumented status severely limits one's work and life options. While gainful employment is of paramount importance and an immediate necessity for the migrant, s/he also has an overall plan and seeks to assess whether this plan is being fulfilled, whether the migration project is leading somewhere. This is also a very important point that needs to be factored in in our understanding of irregular migration and asylum seeking and in our analysis of how they can be managed. Migrants respond to both short term and long term wishes that develop in parallel and are shaped by both conditions at destination and at origin. The account of a 38-year old Ukrainian man from Eastern Ukraine who lives in Athens with his family is particularly telling in this respect:

> "We finished University, we got married and then we left for Greece. We had not worked before. In Ukraine it was very difficult to find a job, they were not paying. At that time there was no internet. What we were hearing about Greece was coming from my mother in law. We wanted to come for 1-2 years to save some money. (..) All our friends have now got jobs, they have homes in Ukraine. And we live here in 28 square metres with the children, [my employer] owes me money at work. We did not find ourselves here... All these years we have [only] managed to help my parents buy a flat in my hometown"

Naturally this feeling of being stuck both literally and with regard to one's life prospects is particularly pronounced and painfully real among Pakistani and Afghan informants who were in detention. There, time felt like stopped because of the uncertainty and lack of control over one's life that was felt much more acutely than in the case of our Ukrainian or Georgian women interviewees. An Afghan young man interviewed in the Amygdaleza detention centre expresses this frustration very clearly:

> "they tell me you will be released tomorrow, the day after.. five months have gone by like this"(Afghan man, aged 19, interviewed in Athens at the Amygdaleza detention centre in spring 2014).

The feeling of being trapped in detention is further exacerbated by the impossibility to work and send money back home:

> "I have made the application [to return voluntarily] if they will send me back. If they let me free here I will not go back, due to economics, I cannot do something there to help my family. It is hard for me there and if they will let me free over here I will go work, to send some money so as to get by (...) I thought here where I am in here I cannot do something for my family, for my wife, for my children, (it's) better to

leave from here, where I will stay here 18 months, 2 years, I don't know how long they will keep me in here. (It's) better to make the application and leave back, to be next to my wife, to my children, to my family." (Pakistani man, aged 30, interviewed in the IOM premises in September 2014)

Albanian informants on the other hand appear to feel trapped in irregular circularity. They are moving, constantly but they are going nowhere with their lives and they keep living in a situation of insecurity:

"Perhaps it is better now that I'll go back there [in Albania], instead of staying here with no work, no papers, scared of the police and with unpaid bills. There I could at least stay at home and walk safely and freely without being afraid of the police, as I am here" (young Albanian woman, aged 19, interviewed in Athens while detained to be returned).

"They think of coming here [in Albania] to build a future, they didn't manage to do it. Here they can't get by with a wage of 200,000-300,000 lek. So they leave their families behind and they take off for Greece once again. There they try seasonal work, they make some money, they come here. In any case, their life is always in movement, fathers in particular. Many migrants returned and then went back to Greece" (Albanian man, aged 45, interviewed in Rhodes).

While today we are speaking of the compression of time and space, here we are witnessing the feeling that time is endless and one is trapped in a physical space or in a situation where undocumented status (and detention for those detained) prevents one from moving, both moving physically and moving symbolically, moving on with one's life (see also Dimitriadi 2015).

The notion of time and space is particularly interesting in accounts of irregular stay and work, as migrants want to continue their migration project, find a job and make money to send back home or to support their families that are with them, but actually undocumented status leads to arrest, which keeps their lives at limbo, also because they often do not know for how long they will detained. Undocumented status also limits so much the options that people feel they are immobile. Indeed while migration is about mobility, irregular migration entails an element of being immobilised (as opposed to being mobile and mobilise one's resources) because of one's status.

Migrants' agency and dynamics of course defies this entrapment. Thus several informants spoke of their plans to move on either as asylum seekers or as economic migrants, to other European countries particularly Germany. They consciously navigate the policy options available to them. Thus asylum seeking is a means to achieve an end, notably to build a future in Germany or elsewhere in Europe:

Interviewer: What have you heard about Germany?
Resp.: I have my friend there Germany, I have heard that there I can get easily political asylum, I can stay better there.

Interviewer: Do you think it is indeed easy to get political asylum there? Do you have some reason for saying that?

Resp: With Greece it is very much easy to get there political asylum.

Interviewer: Do you have a reason for doing that, to say that for that reason I am afraid to go back to Pakistan?

Resp: I have no fear, I just don't want to go back. I want to go to Europe. Europe, forwards. Germany, Italy. (Pakistani man, aged 23, interviewed in Athens in February 2014)

As Jayasuriya and McAuliffe (2015) point out, migrants actively assess their chances with regard to the different policy channels. However as also Van Hear demonstrates (2014) one can go only as far as one's money can take them. Thus the price to pay the smugglers for organising the trip (reported to be 2,000 Euro in the case of our informant above) is a severe obstacle that the migrant needs to overcome. Indeed the passage of from Doreen Massey (2003: 61 cited by Van Hear 2014: S109) is particularly telling:

"different social groups and different individuals are placed in very distinct ways in relation to … flows and interconnections. This point concerns not merely the issue of who moves and who doesn't.. it is also about power in relation to the flows and the movement. Different social groups have different relationships to this… mobility; some are more in charge of it than others; some initiate flows and movement, others don't; some are more on the receiving end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it."

5. Concluding Remarks

This study shows the need to focus on the agency of migrants, the fact that migrants are individuals who weigh their options and take risks to achieve more opportunity and security. The primary essence of migration is the migrant's motivation. Once the migrant has made a mental commitment to migration and the process is set in motion, policies become hurdles to overcome, costs to assess or opportunities to take advantage of. Therefore, a better understanding of irregular migration and asylum seeking dynamics can be achieved by turning our conceptual categories upside down and concentrating on the migrant rather than on the policies and their effectiveness.

For policy makers, the point of departure for analysis is the management or control of flows, their categorisation and placement into distinct boxes/categories. For the migrant the point of departure is their changing life circumstances or actually the lack of a way out, from the non-change of their life circumstances. Policy categories seek to distinguish clearly between legal and irregular migration and between real and bogus asylum seekers (or successful and rejected ones). However, an insider look into the dynamics of irregular migration points to the need of going beyond such conceptual fixity.

For migrants with mixed motivations of both insecurity and poverty it is not clear which comes first and it may safely be argued that actually one is the catalyst of the other.

There is a need for considering how such complex interrelationship can be addressed in the nexus of migration and asylum governance. The current conceptualisation of the two phenomena as separate and distinct fails to take into account of the complex realities on the ground and leads both people in need of protection not to apply for asylum, economic migrants to apply as a temporary regularisation measure and actually opens no viable alternatives for those fleeing a mix of both problems. The governance and control of irregular migration and the management of asylum need to be understood by policy makers and researchers as a continuum rather than as separate and compartmentalised policy and governance domains of human flows.

Similarly the compartmentalisation among legal, irregular and asylum seeking moves needs to be reconsidered. These notions for the people who consider moving are means to an end. The end being securing better life prospects for themselves and their children and/or supporting family back home, including extended family or family of origin. So these are policy options which they consider and on which they gather information. This also relates to the question of obtaining a visa and what kind of visa so also to European and national visa policy. Thus a person who decides to migrate pushed by a combination of economic and sometimes political factors goes through a slippery slope sliding from the regular to the irregular options depending on what is available and they do not even see the distinction between legal and irregular channels other than as obstacles or opportunities for realising their project.

Our understanding of migrant networks needs also to be enlarged to include different types of intermediate actors. Friends or close family members with first-hand information and previous migration experience is crucial there for informing the person and putting them in contact with the relevant intermediate agents. Our understanding of smuggling agents needs also to be modified: it is difficult to make a sharp distinction between the criminal agents and the semi-legal agencies, the native employers or the fellow nationals who help make the arrangements for one's unauthorised entry to the destination country. Speaking of a migration industry or a migration infrastructure has become fashionable in recent years but risks obfuscating the complex nature of the networks involved (see also Triandafyllidou and Maroukis 2012). For instance, there is a number of travel agencies that are connected with local smuggling agents who in turn bribe border guards and make migration possible. Similarly native employers make arrangements through migrant workers so that their family or friends can come and fill in available jobs in the informal economy.

In this process, information is crucial as it mobilises and increases or decreases the other resources of the prospective migrant. Information is a catalyst of the other types of capital, whether financial, social or human. Initial information can be contextual and diffuse or specific. There is a continuum moving from a generic contextual knowledge to searching for specific knowledge and developing a plan to move and then looking for ways to make it happen. That is where policies come into play as the migrant may factor in knowledge about what happens in a specific destination country and hence chose the country in relation to that but the migrant may also ignore such information and only concentrate on where they need to go to address their needs and thus look for appropriate

means and solutions. Information is a type of social or material or symbolic capital. It helps build or convert capital. It is a crucial resource and structures risk, uncertainty, trust.

Interestingly the category of meaning legal vs irregular dawns on the migrants only after a certain period of time has lapsed and they realise that their classification as with or without documents limits their life prospects, their ability to go back to their country of origin and see relatives as well as their plans for the future. Thus while it seems that migration control policies may have a limited influence upon the first part of the decision making as migration and asylum seeking motivations take the toll, they come back with a vengeance with time as undocumented status becomes a trap, both a physical trap of immobility and a social trap as it prevents the migrant from moving on with her/his life.

A different perspective is necessary in our looking into the governance of irregular migration, taking the focus away from policies and zooming in on human agency and the migrant motivations.

The above findings suggest that one size fits all policies cannot address irregular migration successfully. As we have seen in the analysis above different individuals from different countries engaging in migration or asylum seeking under different circumstances respond in varied ways to similar policy obstacles and constraints. Thus migration control and management policies should be tailored to the groups that they are addressing rather than to a generic scope of guarding the border or controlling the labour market.

The same is true as concerns information campaigns. The Australian and UK government have conducted related research concluding that there is a need for tailored information campaigns that takes into account the kind of motivations and root causes the different groups have, the countries where they plan/prefer to go and why, and how to get the message through so that migrants believe it (McAuliffe et al 2014). However in our view information campaigns should focus more on the changing situation in the country of origin rather than on the policies of the country of destination. Instead of using categories such as legal and illegal/unlawful they should provide information on whether the migrant's needs and desires can be met at destination and what are alternative avenues for meeting these desires. So the challenge of getting the information through is not just a question of the messenger but also about the focus of the information which should take into account the migrant's motivations more than the consequences of a potential irregular move and the threat of sanctions.

As Phil Martin put it in a private conversation in Florence in June 2015, migration is a journey of hope and fear, hope for betterment, fear of the unknown. Just as with airplane crashes, most people will continue to migrate after disasters under the theory that it will not happen to them.

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