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The 'Crisis' in Albania before the 'Crisis' in Greece: The Case of Albanian Migrants in Corinth[1]

Maria Panteleou
(University of the Aegean, Greece)
pantmaria@hotmail.com

This article looks in a diachronic perspective at the labour conditions and precarity of contemporary Albanian immigrants in Greece. The discussion examines past cultural strategies and current new tactics to address immigrants' 'cultural' approaches to different 'crises' and look at how they have either remained stable or have changed over time. Using the case study of Albanian immigrants who work 'seasonally' in the city of Corinth and live in the wider region, the discussion analyses the way in which Albanians handle their social networks; in particular, it focuses on the shifting relevance of old and new networks in finding a job. The discussion considers the declining relevance of the old Albanian social networks that helped them to find a job in Greece during the 1990s; they now consider the members of these networks as potential competitors. In contrast, the Albanian immigrants who have settled in Greece have built new networks, specifically with Greek regional employers, using the relationships that they have developed with Greek nationals. The article shows how Albanians trigger a wider network of 'acquaintances' with other employers, which opens up job opportunities in various contexts and concludes that immigrants tackle modern economic and labour challenges by transforming their own cultural strategies.
Keywords: Albanian migrant crisis, labour, social network, Greece, Albania.

Introduction

It is widely accepted that the modern globalized financial fluidity is a result of political, economic and social decisions occurred at international level but influence the way in which national governments operate, thus affecting ordinary people's everyday life. However, Papataxiarchis (2018: 229) argues that in describing such globalized financial fluidity as a 'crisis', there is a risk of confusing the emic and etic dimensions of this process.[2] Furthermore, previous assessments of the current situation as something new have failed to highlight the possible continuities (or transformations) of equally determinant past historical moments, which people may describe as 'crisis'. In this article, I follow Hirsch and Stewart (2005) on the relevance of the 'subjective' dimension — as meaningful historical[3] and temporal moments —

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[2] Papataxiarchis (2018: 228-232) points out that, in Greece, the everyday use of the word 'crisis' carries political and ideological connotations, which, he argues, blurs the boundaries between the exercise of politics and the analytical usefulness of the word in anthropology. He suggests (Papataxiarchis 2014: 17-32), that the word 'crisis' should be used to study the locals' point of view (emic), and that the word 'trouble' would be more appropriate for analytical purposes (etic) because it would highlight the historical aspect of the current (insecurity) events in the country; that is, the specific political, economic, social and ideological processes that have been taking place in Greece since the 20th century.

[3] The word 'historical' is used here as a derivative of 'historicity'. Hirsch and Stewart (2005: 261-263) define 'historicity' as a dynamic social process that examines the links between the past, the present and

to examine the strategies that people adopt to address everyday challenges to find out whether the current socio-economic conditions in Greece create new responses to these challenges or simply redefine old, familiar attitudes.

The present discussion attempts to widen the existing anthropological literature on the Greek 'crisis', which deals mainly with native Greeks, by looking at Albanian immigrants who have lived and worked in Greece since the 1990s and are now facing the same social, economic and political challenges as the native population. I shall address immigrants' culturally structured ways of responding to different 'crises'. I draw on data collected during my fieldwork (2015-2017) through participant observation and semi-structured interviews with Albanian immigrants aged between 38 and 50 years, who have lived and worked in the city of Corinth and two nearby villages since 1998. All names of the interviewees have been changed in order to ensure their anonymity.

Albanian immigrants in Corinth have lived through two different temporal and spatial conditions, subjectively defined as 'crises'. The first relates to life in Albania, either during communism or after the collapse of the communist regime. The second crisis occurred around 2008 in Greece. Albanian immigrants link both 'crises' to the precarious labour and economic conditions that they had to face, and the ways in which they ensured their livelihood.

The 'provisioning' approach (Narotzky 2005) may explain how Albanian immigrants followed different formal economic and informal non-economic paths in order to gain access to goods and services (Narotzky 2005: 83) during the 'crisis' both in Albania and in Greece. Specifically, the historical and culturally-constructed conditions of institutionalized public provisioning of goods and services (Narotzky 2005: 81-82) of communist Albania staggered after the collapse of the regime in the 1990s. In the reasoning of Albanians, the first 'crisis' was caused by the withdrawal of the state's provisioning of goods and services and the shrinkage of the official, public employment sector. That 'crisis' motivated them to turn to informal social networks of relatives and 'friends' to migrate to Greece in order to secure employment and thus their livelihoods. Anthropological studies have shown the importance of informal social networks in gaining access to material and non-material resources both in 'normal' conditions (Pardo 1996) and during 'crises' (Spyridakis 2017, 2010). The work of Spyridakis on Greece (2017, 2010) shows that the ability of people to build informal social networks helps them to acquire goods, services and rights that may not be available in times of financial 'crisis', including the right to work. Such informal networks are governed by different moral and cultural values depending on the context. In his study on Naples, Pardo (1996) shows that people cope 'in a pragmatic way with the paradox of being forced to seek rights as favours' (Pardo 1996: 157), and choose to acquire such rights in ways that agree with their own moral code.

The cultural logic of Albanians' networking is controlled by relations of trust similar to those described by Pardo (1996), who explains that trust is fundamental in the construction and dynamics of informal networks. Among Albanian immigrants, such relations are based on

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the future and the ways in which the past and the future are intertwined in the present. This approach does not assume that events and time of events unfold in a linear path.

personal acquaintanceship with co-nationals (Narotzky 2005: 89), who provided non-material assets during the 'Albanian crisis' (assistance to find work in Greece) and are, then, transformed into material goods (labour) during the Greek 'crisis', which they 'subjectively' experience and describe as a 'second crisis'. In the current unstable situation in Greece, new informal non-economic ways of provisioning material and non-material goods play a decisive role in ensuring their livelihoods; specifically, throughout the 2010s, Albanian immigrants have relied on the new social networks and relations of 'trust' that they have built with Greek employers in Corinth. This approach is similar to that described by Prato (2010) in post-communist Albania. Following Pardo (1996), Prato stresses precisely the relevance of 'trust' in the construction of new networks, and in the expansion of existing networks, to navigate the uncertainties that followed the collapse of the communist regime.

The next two sections address the ways in which Albanians have responded to different 'crises' in both a temporal and spatial context. This comparative approach will help to bring out continuities and transformations of culturally specific modes of behaviour in dealing with 'crisis'.

The 'Crisis' in Albania

The majority of Albanian immigrants in Corinth view the collapse of the Communist regime in the 1990s as a 'crisis', which they say was different from what they are experiencing now in Greece. This distinction is exemplified by Arben's description during our discussion in the courtyard of his home in a Corinthian village in May 2017. Arben, a 40-year-old informant from Berat, said that, among other things, 'the wages are now low with the crisis.' However, when I asked what he meant by the expression 'now with the crisis', he replied:

> 'What we have here is not a crisis. It is a small crisis. When the regime fell, when Albania went bankrupt, nobody knew what to do, whether to stay in the country or leave. Then, we left with means that your mind cannot imagine […] Money? Work? Food? We had nothing. Not even a piece of bread […] *That* is a crisis, and we, the Albanians, know what a crisis is.'

Arben's statement illustrates the way in which Albanian immigrants see and construct the concept of 'crisis' in a spatial and temporal frame different from the Greek one; specifically, with reference to Albania in the aftermath of the collapse of the communist regime in the 1990s. Arben remembers that Albania's 'bankruptcy' — which was reflected in the country's failure to ensure employment, food and money — led many Albanians to migrate to unknown destinations using any means available. When compared to the Greek context, their past experience and memory of that 'crisis' determine Albanians' view of the current conditions in Greece as a 'small crisis'. Thus, the 'crisis' becomes contextualized and acquires a new, subjective dimension that makes Albanians feel that 'they' are familiar with 'crises' or, more accurately, as Arben puts it, 'we, the Albanians, know of crisis'. The rhetoric of the Albanian immigrants seems to respond to what Knight (2015a: 3-4) called the process of 'cultural proximity' through which, especially in times of rapid social change, people tend to view significant past events as culturally close to the present, despite being temporally distant. In the

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case of Albanian immigrants, these past events are either the communist period or the collapse of the regime.

Albanians' response to the Albanian 'crisis' of the 1990s resulted in migration abroad and in the re-emergence of the *kurbet* — the traditional mobility practice of Albanian society since the second half of the 15th century, which resurfaced after the overthrow of communism and the opening of borders. Many Albanians fled the country, migrating mainly to Greece and Italy in search of better living conditions (Papailias 2003: 1064; King and Vullnetari 2003: 18-19; King et al. 2006: 413-414; Prato 2009: 92-97; Vullnetari 2012: 59-60; Gregorič Bon 2016: 64-65 and 2017: 302-303).

The Albanians among whom I carried out my fieldwork migrated to Greece in 1990, soon after the collapse of the communist regime. Initially, they worked and lived in various regions of Greece, before settling in the Corinth area in 1998. They were mostly employed as seasonal workers. Strictly speaking, the word 'seasonal' implies that work is available only in a limited season of the year. However, in the case of Albanian immigrants the seasonal work is neither exclusive nor restrictive in the sense that they welcome any available job and, thus become employed throughout the year; for example, as agricultural workers during the summer, or as construction workers, house painters, and so on, at other times.

Their mobility in pursuit of work was based on the social networks of their co-nationals. Groups of ethnic Albanians were scattered throughout Greece, and they provided information on the jobs available where they were based. As a result, in the 1990s Albanian immigrants were constantly on the move working a wide range of multiple 'seasonal' works in different places.[4]

Edi, a 43-year-old man from Elbasan, who lives in the region of Corinth and works in the wider area, says that in the 1990s his social ethnic network helped him to gain access to several job opportunities. Edi's reliance on his ethnic network seems to be based on the concept of the so-called 'known', a person who can be trusted. Let me explain. During our conversation, Edi repeatedly described those who helped him find various jobs in Greece as people he 'knew'. He explained:

> 'The known is not one person. At first, the known was my cousin in Crete. I was there one year, working seasonally in the fields. Afterwards, my brother followed. Then, I went to Veroia, near the border, you know. He told me that work was available there, seasonally, harvesting peaches, crop and so on. I stayed in Veroia for two years and half. Then, my groom told me 'come to Athens, I can help you'. Many Albanians working in construction did two jobs per day.'

[4] The connection between the spatial distribution of Albanian migrants and the kind of work they undertook is described by King (2008: 298-299), Vullnetari (2007: 50) and King and Vullnetari (2003: 37-38). However, my study has not confirmed this connection. The aforementioned scholars report that in urban areas, such as Athens, Thessaloniki and Patras, employment was available throughout the year, while in rural Greece Albanians were mainly employed in the agricultural sector during the summer months and the seasonal fruit harvest.

The 'known' in Edi's narrative alternate over the time. Specifically, his cousin was the 'known' who helped him to find agricultural work and 'seasonal' work in Crete. Later, the 'known' was his brother, who lived in Veroia and told him that there was seasonal work available. Finally, it was Edi's groom, who helped him find a job in the construction sector in Athens.

Contemporary studies on Albanian migration have adopted either a transnationalist approach or the social networks theory to analyse the relevance of ethnic networks. According to these studies, ethnic networks are important to determine the immigrants' places of residence and obtain valuable information about the living and working conditions in Greece and in other countries (Labrianidis and Lyberaki 2005: 206-209; Carletto et al. 2005; Iosifides et al. 2007: 1347-1352; Stampini et al. 2008: 80-81; Dahinden 2010: 132-134; Iosifides and Kizos 2012: 332-334; Gemi 2015: 28-30).

Significantly, the social networks of the Albanian immigrants in Corinth include not only the categories of 'known' pointed by Edi in his narrative; the 'known' could be consanguineal kin (cognates), affinal kin (affine) and 'friends' (neighbours). As Scott (2000: 26, 28) notes, the importance of kinship and friendship for the construction of people's social networks has been highlighted since the 1950s and 1960s by anthropologists of the Manchester School, such as John Barnes and Clyde Mitchell, and by sociologists like Elizabeth Bott. The case of Albanian immigrants reminds us of Mitchell's argument that interpersonal social networks are important both for 'the transfer of information between individuals' and for 'the transfer of material goods and services between people' (quoted in Scott 2000: 30). Mitchell suggests that the quality of people's relationships can be examined through 'reciprocity'; that is, the degree by which people reciprocate or do not reciprocate certain transactions (quoted in Scott 2000: 31). In his work on Naples, Pardo (1996) analyses how people mobilize kin, friends and acquaintances, including neighbours, in constructing personal networks and gaining access to material and non-material resources. Significantly, Pardo shows how these networks are crucial in a system of 'exchange of favours' that is based on trust (or, the 'knowing' mentioned by various immigrants) and expectations of reciprocal help; however, Pardo points out, such reciprocity is guided by moral and cultural values that do not necessarily demand an immediate return. Spyridakis (2010) raises similar issues of trust and values in his study of 'workers′ social practices' in the Piraeus. There, Greek workers in the shipbuilding and repairing industry who have lost their job have looked for occasional employment to supplement their income both within and beyond the local market. A central role in finding employment is played by their social networks, which include friends, neighbours, family and relatives, as well as trade unionists linked to different political parties. These social links provide information about employment opportunities and are part of the historically defined framework of exchange of favours, services and mutual support (Spyridakis 2010, 2017). In the case of Albanian immigrants, the people who initially helped them to find work in Greece belonged to social relationships established in Albania, which were part of a system of exchange that

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anthropologists have described as 'generalized reciprocity'.[5] Papageorgiou (2011:145-147) interprets Albanian kinship and social relations in Greece as a form of 'generalized reciprocity'. Prato explains that the Albanian traditional system could be 'described as a system of socially-based generalized reciprocity (*à la* Sahlins 1965)' (Prato 2010: 145). However, she suggests that, in post-communist Albania, the 'traditional system of reciprocity appears to be moving towards a system of 'exchange of favours' of the kind described by Pardo (1996) in his Naples ethnography' (Prato 2010: 145, 146-148).

My research findings in the municipality of Kurbin in northern Albania reveal a similar situation. I carried out research in Kurbin between December 2017 and July 2018 on work strategies among Albanians between the ages of 32 and 47. I found that people build networks of mutual 'help' with relatives or non-relatives, depending on the context, to gather information on immigration policies in Greece, Italy, Germany and France and on how to find jobs in these countries.

The 'help' that Albanians receive in order to migrate abroad is based on a wide range of ties of 'mutual help' with their relatives and 'friends'. This network of relationships is not limited to the employment sector but includes different forms of reciprocity on other aspects of life; for example, 'help' to obtain legal documents for a relative living in France, 'monetary help' in the form of 'lending money' to a 'friend' in Albania, and so on. All these forms of aid will be reciprocated at an unspecified future, and the 'reciprocated help' can take a different form from that originally received. Most of the time, however, this framework is applied to the job sector; in particular, the Albanians among whom I did my research have received 'help' from relatives and 'friends' in the form of information to find work in the foreign country where those relatives and friends were based.

As I mentioned earlier, anthropological analyses of social networks and reciprocity in post-socialist Albania bring out an important aspect which is central to understanding their contemporary dynamics. Significantly, as Prato (2010, 2017) points out, it would be analytically misleading to interpret these social networks as the 'reappearance' of old forms of social organization and reciprocity that existed in the pre-communist and communist periods.[6] Instead, they are a new system of 'exchange of favours', whereby personal networks extend beyond the immediate kin, 'friends' and neighbours, and are activated for new purposes (Prato

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[5] The anthropological debate on reciprocity is rooted in Mauss's analysis of the gift. According to Mauss (1979: 117-123), gift exchange entails 'reciprocal' obligations between the parties; that is, the obligation to offer, to accept and to reciprocate the gift. Mauss suggested that this system of reciprocity forms the most basic institution of sociability and exchange in non-Western societies (Mauss 1979: 171-172). Sahlins (cited in Narotzky 2007: 78-79) introduced the expression 'generalized reciprocity' on the basis of Malinowski's observations of forms of exchange in the Trobriand Islands. According to Sahlins, help is motivated by the need of the recipient, who in turn bears social responsibility and the moral obligation to reciprocate at a future time.

[6] For the formation and operation of the 'traditional' system of networking and reciprocity of Albanians during the pre-communist period, see Lawson and Saltmarshe (2002: 489, 494-495), Bardhoshi (2007: 24), Prato (2017: 108, 117 and 2010: 137), and, during the communist period, Schwandner-Sievers (1996: 119), De Waal (2014: 138-139) and Musaraj (2016: 135-136).

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2010: 143-148, 2012: 95-96, 2017: 118). Examples of such new purposes include overcoming legal and bureaucratic barriers (Musaraj 2009), gaining access to health services (Prato 2010: 144; Elsie 2010: 188; Danaj 2014: 125) or gaining access to work opportunities (Danaj 2014: 126) and real estate (Prato 2010: 145-146; Bardhoshi 2011).

Taking into account the heterogeneous formation of these networks, it could be argued that, depending on circumstances, in post-socialist Albania the appeal to reciprocal 'help' can be directed to different 'trustable' relations, from members of the nuclear family (Lawson et al. 2000: 1503; Voell 2012: 154, 156; Arsovska 2015: 122) to more distant matrilineal relatives (Prato 2010: 146; Bardhoshi 2011: 18), to non-relatives with whom Albanians have built new relationships of 'trust' (Saltmarshe 1999: 126-128; Lawson et al. 2000: 1511; Lawson and Saltmarshe 2002: 497; Prato 2010: 148 and 2012: 95-96).

The 'new' application of this cultural practice of kinship and friendship networking is also at the basis of the way in which Albanian immigrants in Corinth mobilize kin and 'friends' whom they regard as 'known' in order to build new networks of 'help' in Greece. To sum up, in the 1990s, these networks of mutual exchange of information were primarily aimed at finding employment in Greece; thus, Albanian immigrants were able to manage the economic and labour precarity of the 'subjectively-defined crisis' that they were experiencing in their own country.

The 'Crisis' in Greece

In the early 1990s, most Albanian immigrants described their work conditions in Greece as 'seasonal'. However, as I mentioned earlier, this word fails to account for the broad range of jobs they did across the country. Their work pattern was marked by periodic and temporary movements in different places in Greece, which guaranteed that they would find a job throughout the year. Nowadays, Albanians who work and live in the wider region of Corinth use the word 'seasonal' to describe the agricultural work available in the area. Their 'multiple mobilities' strategy has changed, too. The reputation they have built in the local job market has allowed them to expand their job opportunities beyond the Corinth region, especially in cities like Athens, which allows them to balance the reduced wages now available in Corinth following Greece's economic downturn.[7] Significantly, the main difference with previous strategies is that the new movements are no longer based on their networks of immediate 'known' — that is, their relatives and 'friends' — but rely on networks of 'acquaintances'. The 'acquaintances' are Greek employers with whom they have established good relationships during their long-term presence in the area of Corinth. Time is of course an important factor;

[7] Spyridakis (2020) has described in detail how Greeks are dealing with the economic downturn. In particular, his ethnographic research in Athens shows how they see and manage the Minimum Guaranteed Income, an economic measure that the Greek state established to help financially disadvantaged citizens. The allowance, however, does not cover their daily needs. Greek citizens conceptualize this allowance as an 'economic complement' (2020: 74), which they combine with other 'pre-crisis strategies' (2020: 76), such as the mobilization of informal social networks of relatives, friends and colleagues in order to ensure access to informal employment.

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the fact that Albanian immigrants 'have lived in the area for years' plays a key role in their relationship with locals. As Fatmir, a 48-year-old man from Lushnjë, says,

> 'We've been living in the area for years. We didn't come recently, like others from Pakistan, from Bangladesh and employers don't know who they are.'

According to Albanian immigrants, local Greek employers acknowledge their long-term presence, and — especially — know that they are willing to undertake not only agricultural work but also any other job that may come up (like house painting, home repairs, gardening, and so on), even for free (for example, to help a Greek employer to transfer some baskets with seasonal fruits to his car). Over time, appreciative local employers have recommended them to other employers in neighbouring villages and in the wider Corinth region.

The activation of these local networks of 'acquaintances' has the potential to produce new relationships with other employers, which translates into lasting mobility, more job opportunities and even the ability to negotiate the economic aspect by placing the work relationship in the context of exchange of favours and 'mutual advantage'. However, this opportunity is not accessible to all Albanian immigrants but only to those who have managed to develop personal relations with the locals based both on 'trust' and on having been involved in events — such as the mutual recognition of the difficult economic situation — that have moved the job relation beyond the monetary sphere. As Pardo (1996: 159) points out, the concept of 'trust is always relevant' but also context-dependent. In his ethnography of the '*popolino*' (ordinary residents) of Naples, Pardo analyses their formal and informal entrepreneurial activities in the context of a complex system of favours that includes kin, friends and neighbours, as well as professionals, trade-unionists, bureaucrats and ordinary people, who help them to acquire or even expand their material and non-material resources (for example, work, reputation, contacts). Pardo also addresses people's 'dis-trust of the powerful who run the institutions though not necessarily of the institutions as such' (Pardo 1996: 159) and shows that Neapolitans' actions within the system of favours constitute alternative ways of gaining access to resources, and that such actions are subjectively interpreted through the lens of a spiritual and moral system that includes 'honesty', 'generosity', 'affection' and 'good-heartedness' (Pardo 1996: 45-46, 58-59).

Sokol, a 44-year-old man from Berat, describes how employees and employers interact in the local Corinthian context and how they primarily achieve their economic needs by integrating them into an intangible economy that proves beneficial for both sides. He says:

> 'Here the boss must know you, trust you. Costas, my landlord, for example, when we have difficulty in paying the rent […] says "come and do some extra work and pay off the rent". That's how we handle our relationships. He doesn't chase us for the money. They know us, they trust us. When they need something else, not just a job, we help them. That is how we stand here.'

From Sokol's and other Albanian immigrants' accounts, it is evident that close relations and particularly 'trust' are primarily built through long time interaction in the labour context, but also extend to other spheres of life. This happens because often Greek employers and

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immigrants cannot meet their financial obligations, which are instead paid by doing extra work or through other forms of assistance. For example, when immigrants cannot pay their house rent, they often pay by doing extra work for the employer, as in Sokol's case. On the other hand, when employers have no money to pay the full salary of Albanian immigrants, they may either pay them in instalments over time, or give them only part of the salary and pay the rest in goods (for example, bottles of olive oil).

Artan's experience is representative of that of many other Albanian immigrants in Corinth and of their perception of 'crisis' in different contexts and times. Artan is 42-year-old man from Fier. I discussed his job situation one afternoon in February 2017 in the Albanian coffee shop in Corinth. Artan said that he worked 'seasonally' in the wider region and added:

> 'If you ask about me, everyone in Loutraki, Corinth and the villages around knows me. They know my name.[8] Everybody knows what kind of work I do [...] I've been living in the area for years. It's not that I came recently and the boss doesn't know who I am. The boss trusts me; because he knows that "I'll hire Artan and he will do a good work", so […] the boss will hire me. He won't hire someone else, because he doesn't know who the other person is; he doesn't know the quality of work he can deliver […] when an employer is happy, he'll tell it to another employer: "I have Artan at work; he's good at tiles or painting", for example. If you've built a good name, the acquaintance with the boss takes you to another boss. Here, you will hear many things [he points with his right hand to the interior space of coffee shop, where there are seven Albanian men], and they say there's a crisis in Greece. There's no payday, no work. I say now we're used to have the crisis […] I never owned a lot nor spent a lot of money, I say the crisis brought me in this situation, what will I do now? I don't know. *I know the crisis* [he says with emphasis], because we also had it in Albania with Hoxha. Then, all Albanians were working all day and we didn't have any bread to eat. That is, you wait in line with the coupon in your hand and go back home with nothing. Can you think of what I'm saying? The milk may be over, let's say, you can go back home without anything. Then the people had nothing, not 150 euros weekly wages like we have here. People had nothing, and when I hear other Albanians talk about the crisis here, I say "Have you ever had money?", "No", he says. So, what changes for me, for you? Nothing changes […] I say it in that way in order to make them understand that they know what the crisis feels like. We moved on with the crisis under Hoxha, we will move on now. Then, with Hoxha, we went through the crisis Greece is facing now. The people moved on without anything then; now, 150 euros is something and we'll move on here'.

Artan begins his long narrative, saying that Greek employers' 'trust' is the result of the Albanian immigrants' long-proven successful work in the Corinthian context, which gained them a 'name' (reputation) in the region. Artan emphasizes his reputation to define his

[8] The word 'name' means reputation in Greek, which is the original language of all narratives.

subjectively constituted work identity and how it affects finding employment in the region. Borrowing from Bourdieu (1986), the relationships of 'trust' between Albanian immigrants and Greek employers could also be described in terms of 'social capital'.[9] We have seen that Albanian immigrants' social capital is linked not only to economic capital — the material profit (Bourdieu 1986: 249) that they gain from the jobs offered by Greek employers — but also to symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1986: 249-251), namely the reputation that they build through their work activity. Specifically, Artan responds to the labour expectations of his Greek employers; he is aware that if the employers are satisfied with the job done, they will introduce him to other employers. These recommendations reinforce the reputation of the Albanian workers and their symbolic capital, which translate into additional jobs and extra economic capital.

Artan's narrative is meaningful not only because he describes in great detail the way in which the 'name' of Albanian immigrants is constructed in the Corinthian context, but also because it brings to the forefront their 'subjectively structured' experiences of the 'crises'. When he states 'I say that we're used to crisis now', he is referring to discussions, among Albanian immigrants who socialize in the Albanian coffee shop in Corinth, about the 'crisis in Greece' and the consequent reduction in their daily wage.

The Greek 'crisis' is interpreted through the lens of the subjectively significant historical past — the 'crisis' of the communist era. During the 'communist crisis', Artan says, Albanian citizens worked all day. Their work, however, was not enough to secure 'bread' for their families; that is, their livelihood was precarious and at risk.[10] Artan explains this inability to secure 'bread' by referring to the queues of Albanians who, holding coupons in their hands, waited their turn to receive the state-provided basic goods. On many occasions, they were told by state employees that the provision of goods was over, so they had to return to their homes 'with nothing.' Several studies on the significant shortage of basic goods in communist Albania confirm Artan's account (Musaraj 2009: 158, 2011: 96, 2012: 178-181; Papageorgiou 2011: 315; Vullnetari and King 2014: 133, 141; King and Vullnetari 2016: 203).

These experiences of the 'crisis' in communist Albania, when 'the people had nothing', are comparatively transposed to Corinth to stress that the current weekly wage of 150 euros, earned by the Albanians in the Corinthian region, is clearly better than what was available in Albania's past 'crisis'. When he hears other Albanian immigrants discussing the 'crisis' in Greece, Artan asks them 'have you ever had money?'. In so doing, Artan does not merely highlight his subjective memory of the 'crisis' in Albania — through which he interprets the present 'crisis' in Greece — but also attempts to stimulate collective past memories among the Albanians who meet at the coffee shop, urging them to reflect that the 'crisis' is a familiar

[9] Bourdieu (1986: 248) defines social capital as 'The aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition'.

[10] According to De Waal (2014: 189, 204), the typical pre-communist way of communication between Albanians included the question, 'Did you have bread?', which means 'have you had food?', because 'bread' was the most important part of any meal. Interestingly, Albanians in Corinth say that they migrated to Greece 'for a piece of bread'; that is, to construct a future free of the extreme hunger and poverty that they had known in the past and that continued to plague Albanian society.

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experience for them. Artan's approach is inspirational and at the same time encouraging — like a slogan;[11] comparing the 'crisis' in Greece with that in Albania encourages other immigrants to realize that going from 'nothing' in Albania to a weekly salary of '150 euros' in Greece is 'something'.

Significantly, however, the 'crisis' and 'poverty' experienced by Albanians during communism is not always recalled for reasons of encouragement. In some cases, such experience is used to emphasize that the Greek 'crisis' primarily concerns Greek citizens, who are used to a life of 'plenty'. Bashkim, a 41-year-old man from Berat, illustrated this point saying, 'Things are hard right now with the crisis and you [the Greeks] have to run it, like we did it when we came to Greece in the 1990'. When I asked him what has changed for him. He replied:

> 'We've lived in a crisis before, with poverty, because we came from Albania from zero […] we've learned from Albania and we're living with few things and moving forward. The salary is low, now. There, we understood the crisis; but we are used to crises […] We, my family have never had much. Under Hoxha no one in Albania had much, not just us. We all lived with difficulty. There was a lot of poverty in Albania, then. I have learned to live with few things; that is, a little bread for the day. Here, they are accustomed to a lot of things; to be paid 100-150 or 200 euros per day […] the Greeks have learned to live with many things. To have money to go to Italy, holidays from here and there, to celebration. Okay, we have grown up differently, with work, home […] It's difficult now with the crisis and you've to work in Corinth or elsewhere, wherever you can find work through acquaintances in order to live. But I'm saying the Greeks have a crisis not the Albanians, we have learned to live with few things.'

Bashkim's narrative, as he speaks on behalf of his fellow Albanians, is mostly formulated in the first-person plural. He, too, argues that Albanians 'have lived in the crisis before', during communism, when 'poverty' was prevalent in Albania. Such past experience makes Albanians familiar with living with 'little' and, in particular, help them cope with the reduced wages they earn in Greece. The 'crisis' in communist Albania is not only presented as a personal predicament — learning to live with 'few thing' — but also as a collective experience, which appears to have 'initiated' Albanians into 'generalized poverty' and 'difficulty'.

According to Bashkim, Greeks are instead used to spend their money on vacations and entertainment,[12] unlike Albanians, who are used to work and stay home. Of course, the

[11] Knight (2015b: 231) examines Greek slogans on walls in western Thessaly, which are based on strong cultural perceptions, and link the current economic liquidity in Greece to historical moments of conflict, hunger and political oppression in the country. He argues that those slogans are not only about identifying political responsibility for the present conditions of uncertainty in Greece but also about reminding people that such conditions can be addressed and overcome.

[12] The views of Albanian migrants converge with those of Greek migrants living in the United Kingdom and the USA (Knight 2015b) and Panama (Theodossopoulos 2013), who believe that their compatriots in Greece are wasting their money on entertainment and other 'irrational' economic behaviour (Knight

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Albanians in this narrative, as in the previous one, are aware that the Greek 'crisis' has affected their lives; in particular, the reduced wages in the Corinthian labour market has motivated them to mobilize 'acquaintances' in order to get additional work elsewhere. Generally, they tend to view their past experiences of the 'crisis' in Albania as an antidote that makes them more resilient in the current situation in Greece.

I was intrigued that in this context Albanian immigrants did not rely on their (ethnic) 'known' to find jobs in Greece as they did in the early 1990s. I found that, over time, the relevance of the ethnic network has declined, especially as immigrants have been joined by their spouses and children to settle permanently in Corinth. Their arrival created different needs, which gave priority to personal, family-related 'interest' over kin's and friends' help.[13] Competition over the available jobs is another important element in the current situation.

Fatos, a 45-year-old man from Fier, described his difficulty in finding work in Corinth in 2016. When I asked if he was thinking of returning to Albania, he said:

> 'But if you leave you can't come back [...] Acquaintances? They'll forget you immediately. If you leave, the other employees say, he's fighting for himself, he's gone. It may be better for me to get a job […] It is worst if the employee is from the same country, the same village, even your cousin, because it's difficult now. Everyone is alone with his family. Look at ten years back, twelve maybe, I didn't have a child. I had another mentality. Now the children grow up. I had a different life before. Now you look more at your own interest. Back then we didn't think the same way, and I said let's help my sister, my brother.'

Like Fatos, other Albanian immigrants who work and live in the Corinth region describe their migratory past as being governed by supportive attitudes among relatives, which contrasts with the present situation. They add that nowadays they will suffer a double blow if they choose to leave Greece. On the one hand, the ethnic 'known' are likely to seize the opportunity of their absence and take their jobs, forgetting the relations of reciprocity that played a key role in finding employment in Greece in the 1990s. On the other hand, should they leave, Greek employers — their 'known acquaintances' — would forget about them, breaking the working ties that were built through long-term presence and hard work and that contributed to the creation of their reputation ('name'), which allowed them to obtain multiple employment opportunities in various spatial contexts.

2015a: 238), suggesting that Greeks are not entitled to complain about the country's difficult economic situation (Knight 2015b: 238-239; Theodossopoulos 2013: 203-204).

[13] Several studies have also pointed out that Albanian migrants, especially those with families, may be influenced by stereotypes about 'dangerous Albanian migrants' (Papageorgiou 2011: 392), which had become widespread in the late 1990s (on Greece, see Psimmenos 2004: 221-223; Papageorgiou 2011: 392-394; on Italy, see Prato 2009). In an attempt to differentiate themselves from other migrants, Albanians emphasize their work identity, stressing that they are 'hard' workers, or referring to the jobs they used to have in Albania (for example, police officer) before migrating to Greece (Psimmenos 2004: 222-223).

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Conclusion

The case study of Albanian immigrants who live and work in the Corinthian region shows that in order to understand how people 'subjectively' construct the meaning of 'crisis' it is necessary to contextualise it historically and spatially. In this article, I have endeavoured to show that Albanian immigrants conceptualize the 'crisis' in relation to two different temporal and historical moments.

The first 'crisis' dates back to the 1990s and is linked to the collapse of the communist regime in Albania. Albanian immigrants associate this moment of 'crisis' to their international migration to Greece to escape the labour and economic precarity that plagued Albania. Their ethnic networks, which they describe as their immediate 'known', helped them to find work 'seasonally' in various Greek regions. Over time, the cultural logic of mutual help and the relevance of the traditional 'known' network has declined, in particular following the arrival of the immigrants' families in Greece and the unstable economic conditions in the country. Now, those 'known' have become potential competitors.

The second 'crisis' experienced by Albanian immigrants takes place in Greece and is associated to the lower wages that they receive due to the economic recession. In such context, they cope with the crisis not through a new transnational mobility (going back to Albania) but through internal mobility in Greece. Transforming the familiar cultural logic of networking, they activate their long-term working relations with their Greek employers. In so doing, Albanian immigrants gain access to broader networks of 'acquaintances' (namely, those of their employers) and obtain extra job opportunities to offset the reduced wages from the jobs available in the Corinth region. In this context of generalized economic downturn, 'work performance' and 'reputation' seem to constitute the only economic guarantees. Paraphrasing Bourdieu (2006), it could be argued that Albanian immigrants are able to transform their symbolic capital — their reputation ('name') — into economic capital, and vice versa. The economic capital — the work performance, the jobs executed successfully — increases the symbolic capital, which opens up access to the 'networks of acquaintances'. Similarly, Albanian immigrants prove in a practical way that the symbolic capital, which they boast they possess, constitutes the credentials (Bourdieu 2006: 194) on which relations of 'trust' with the locals are build. To sum up, their ethnography seems to confirm Bourdieu's argument that 'capital goes to capital' (Bourdieu, 2006: 193-194).

Finally, we have seen that Albanian immigrants view the present conditions of 'crisis' in Greece through the lens of their collective memories of the past Albanian 'crisis'. Reference to the past helps them to reconstruct the present (Gefou-Madianou 2006: 60); specifically, the past is used to acknowledge the 'crisis' in Greece but also to distinguish the different meanings and impacts it has on the native Greeks and the Albanian immigrants. On the one hand, immigrants say, 'Greeks have a crisis not the Albanians, we have learned to live with few things'; on the other hand, reference to the past is used to encourage other Albanian immigrants to remain positive in the context of the Greek 'crisis', arguing that their weekly wages of '150 euros is something' compared to the 'nothing' they had during the Albanian 'crisis'.

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