Absence of a "community" and spatial invisibility: migrants from Albania in Greece and the case of Thessaloniki

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HAL Id: halshs-00691888

https://shs.hal.science/halshs-00691888

Submitted on 27 Apr 2012

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Abstract

The intention of this paper is to shed some light on the mode of organization of the Albanian immigration in Greece. Firstly we intend to maintain a hypothesis of a non-communitarian organization of this particular migration. For this purpose we explore the Albanians' social networks. Then, we make a second assumption: their diffusion. in the urban space as well as the absence of any ethnic infrastructure suggest a spatial invisibility of the Albanians in the Greek city. Exploring the example of Thessaloniki, the second largest Greek city after Athens, we will maintain that Albanians' non-communitarian social insertion is reflected in the urban space: despite their large numbers in Thessaloniki, there is no evidence of any ethnicized district.

Introduction

Albanian immigrants are far more numerous than other foreigner groups in Greece, since they make up almost 58% of the total foreign population of the country (438,036 individuals), (ESYE, 2001). Nonetheless, the Albanian migration in Greece is a remarkable phenomenon not only for the intensity in which it takes place and the number of individuals it involves, but also because it seems to deviate from some of the more "classic" migration patterns, particularly as far as community organization is concerned.

As will be outlined below, Albanian migration in Greece is not organized as a distinct "community". Drawing upon the body of work done on this issue, the article examines the notions of community and migrant organization in the host country, and suggests that these could also take a spatial dimension. In the first place, we will study the Albanian immigrants' social networks in Greece while exploring the kind of bond

those networks are based on. We will also argue that the Albanians' non-communitarian organization is reflected in the urban space: Albanian households are rather geographically dispersed in the city; moreover, despite their large numbers, Albanians do not dispose of any ethnic infrastructure (schools, worship places, cafés, restaurants, etc.) that could give a spatial visibility to the migratory group. Through the example of Thessaloniki, the largest Greek city after the capital, we will maintain that, in the Albanians' case, we do not observe any ethnicization of urban space, meaning that we cannot locate any visible signs of Albanians' ethnicity that permanently mark the city's space. In other words, Albanians as a group do not have their own *centrality* in Thessaloniki – an area in which their practices, culture, etc. would be exposed and recognized by the non-Albanians.

The research material being referred to in this paper is drawn from the research programme *"Supporting the Design of Migration Policies: an Analysis of Migration Flows between Albania and Greece"* commissioned by the World Bank and conducted between the period of December 2005 to June 2006. For the purposes of this assignment 128 semi-structured interviews with the Albanian immigrants in Greece were conducted. The sample was based on the information gathered during the *LSMS* survey carried out in Albania in 2005[i].

As part of the research programme, parallel qualitative information was drawn from the 29 interviews conducted on Albanian immigrants residing in the Northern Greece in the period between 2005 to 2006. Out of these interviews, 19 were conducted in the district of Thessaloniki and the remaining 10 took place in the districts of Imathia, Katerini and Chalkidiki. Issues such as discrimination experienced, socialization and contacts in the host society, relations with other Albanians, reasons for settling in a particular neighborhood or quarter in Thessaloniki, food and worship habits, etc. were discussed with our Albanian informants.

To facilitate our analysis we will also lean on the cartographic material presented elsewhere (see Kokkali 2007 and 2005). Census data from 2001 concerning

the areas of residence of the Albanian and Bulgarian populations of Thessaloniki has been mapped, in order to compare the different spatial patterns generated in the urban space. The maps make use of the Location Quotient (LQ) for its simplicity and straightforwardness, also its ability to neutralize the parasitical effects generated when comparing populations of very different sizes[ii].

Migrants' social networks: the Albanian case

The concept of migratory networks, often characterized as "social bridges" between various spaces (Portes, 1995), is central for the analysis of the Albanian migration in Greece. Once international labour flows start, networks emerge between migrants and their places of origin. This makes the movement self-sustaining over time. The earlier migration of other family members or other members in the community of origin can influence the decision of a person to emigrate. Networks tend to develop such strength and momentum which support continuing migration even after the original economic motives have declined or disappeared. This is so because they can reduce the cost, the financial and physical risk that involve in migration by providing direct assistance or information. Hence, at a certain point in the migratory episode, flows of international labour can be better explained by the networks' influence than by the conditions that had given rise to these flows in the very beginning. Besides, the fast exchange of information and the flexibility of these networks can easily deviate from the official efforts to channel or remove migratory flows, thus limiting the effectiveness of police control policies (Massey, 2004; Massey *et al*., 1993; Portes & DeWind, 2004: 831). This suggests that there is no clear correlation between, on one hand, migrants' social networks, their effectiveness and extension, and on the other hand, the migration policies being either "welcoming" or unwelcoming[iii].

A. The extension of the Albanian migratory networks

These forces are at play in Albania. An overwhelming majority of Albanian households have a familial connection with international migration. According to the last census in 2001, almost half of the households currently living in the country have directly experienced some form of international migration since 1990. The Albanian households have access to the migratory networks either through direct temporary migration of a member of the household or through their children living abroad. Let us note that of all the children who have left their parents' house, a surprising 35% currently live abroad. More particularly, among those children who left the parental house in the 1990s, one out of two lives currently outside the country. Furthermore, until 2002, twelve years after the opening of the Albanian border, one family out of two has at least one sibling of the household head living abroad, three out of four have at least one nephew of the family head living abroad, one out of two has at least one cousin and one out of five at least one grandchild that lives abroad. It is of note that only one family out of ten does not have any of their relatives of the household head living outside Albania (Carletto *et al*., 2005 and 2006).

Research on the Albanian immigrants in Greece comes to reinforce these findings. Jennifer Cavounidis (2004: 10) finds that 60% of the Albanians in Greece had a relative there prior to their arrival, and another 15% had no family but an acquaintance or a friend living in Greece.

According to another survey carried out by Labrianidis & Brahimi (2000), nearly 64% of the men interviewed had *friends* in Greece before their arrival. It is however necessary to note that probably by "friends" it is meant . relatives, . friends or . acquaintances, considering the very high percentage recorded. The percentage of the women claiming that they had "friends" in Greece prior to their arrival is even higher (more than 87%), which is not surprising at all considering that in general Albanian women follow their husbands abroad.

Our study does not oppose these findings. According to the answers registered, for two people out of five (40%), the major reason to emigrate to Greece for the first time was the fact that a relative of the interviewee is/ was already living in Greece.

Family migratory networks thus play a key role in the decision of Albanians to emigrate, as well as in furthering future household migration to the same destination. Consequently, it becomes increasingly difficult to find in Albania the 'new' migratory households: the extension of Albanians' migratory networks is an undeniable fact (Carletto *et al*., 2005).

B. Migrants' social networks as an organising element in the host country

It is important not to forget that the migratory networks do not simply operate as a factor that influences and enables the decision to emigrate, the preliminary travel and the first place of installation. Such networks should also be understood as the organizing elements of the migration in the reception society. While providing a basis of mutual support in the land of immigration, these networks help the migrants to surpass some initial difficulties and problems, and connect them to their places of origin. By prolonging their stay, migrants interact with both their co-nationals and the local population (Portes, 1995).

Different types of networks, which may develop simultaneously, could be distinguished: networks of kinship, friends and acquaintances, village networks, networks with a more institutionalized nature (such as the various types of ethno-local or migrant associations), or even antiracist organizations and trade unions. The latter are often the result of interaction between migrants and the citizens (or even institutions) of the host country. Particularly regarding Albanians, their ethno-cultural or other associations seem to emerge from informal groups of kinship and friends that are later institutionalized.

The interpersonal relations (social, professional, etc.) that structure the life of migrants in the host country could be envisaged as a form of collective and spontaneous organization which mitigates the disappointments of the transplantation, facilitates the lives of the newcomers, smoothes over administrative difficulties, and ensures the first accommodation or the first recruitment (Poinard & Hilly, 1983: 57).

Both Carletto *et al.* (2005 and 2006) and Cavounides (2004) have illustrated the dominance of family relations to any other type of bond among Albanian migrants. The family – being 'sacred' for Albanians – is, indeed, the most solid and concrete form of social organization. According to Gilles De Rapper (2002), the solidarity that family provides replaces those of the local and/or the national community, which Albanians do not rely on at any rate.

The primacy of family and familial ties is naturally reflected in the life of the Albanian migrants in the host country. Indeed, the Albanian 'community' in Greece is basically structured around family networks. A newcomer will come to settle at a village/city where there is already settled with a relative (or less importantly, a friend) of his/hers. Besides, as already mentioned, the decision to migrate and the place of installation are strongly correlated to the earlier emigration of other family members. Moreover, Albanians in Greece often live together with other relatives.

Our findings support these observations. Our respondents have almost always followed one or more members of their extended family- this often generates very precise trajectories, especially at the beginning of a migration episode.

Ed. and his wife El. initially went to Corfu, where an uncle of Ed. was already settled. Then they went to Veria, where the brother of El. lived, who – in his turn – had arrived there 15 years ago accompanying his father. The latter had gone to Veria because another relative had already settled there [iv]...

This is also the case of L. who initially wanted to come to Thessaloniki with his wife E., because her brother was already there. Yet, the couple did not have enough money to get to Thessaloniki; they thus stopped in Skydra, a small town

nearby, where they found a seasonal job in an amusement park. At the end of the summer, their employer left for Thessaloniki to work there during the winter. They followed him in order to join the brother of E. Upon arrival in Thessaloniki, a friend helped the couple to find the brother of E., who provided them their first accommodation in the city. They stayed at his place until they were able to earn some money and rent their own apartment[v]...

The personal stories of these two couples not only underline the rapid circulation of information, that is – as already said – a basic component of migrant social networks; but they also witness the significance of family bond. The latter becomes even more apparent, when considering that migrants from Albania share their houses in Greece mostly with their relatives of the extended family.

The majority of our sample (86%) shares a dwelling with people who are either members of the nuclear family (husband/wife and children) or the people with whom they also share all revenues and expenses (i.e. have a common budget). We have to specify, however, that the latter are often some kind of relatives too (for instance siblings). Besides, apart from those belonging to the aforementioned categories, the people with whom the respondent shares his/her residence are again mostly relatives (¾), the rest being Albanian friends (¼).

The case of women is exemplary of the dominance of family bonds. The majority of them have followed their husbands, parents or brothers. This not only reflects the dependent nature of the female Albanian immigration, but also the primacy of family ties. Labrianidis & Lyberaki (2001: 186-189) have observed that the majority of their women interviewees (83.5%) came directly to live in the houses rented and arranged beforehand by their husbands.

Beyond family networks, migration generally also involves other types of networks such as village networks or ideological networks (i.e. political or politico-religious ones), that act in the entire migratory field: for the success of migratory

project, national and/or local practices, access to employment, investments, etc. (Autant & Manry, 1998: 72-73).

We will not examine in detail the various types of Albanian networks, since this is beyond the scope of this article. Some preliminary observations, however, seem to allow us to put forward a first hypothesis. The networks of friends, acquaintances or the village networks seem to function in more or less the same way as the family networks: one mobilizes the existing bonds from Albania to help oneself in Greece in various manners (accommodation, job finding, etc.).

For these reasons, G. seems to have initially gone to Veria, where he had a friend who helped him to find a house and a job. After 4 years G. also brought his wife, D. After both of them had been unemployed for about a year, they decided to leave for Albania. However, a Greek offered them a job in Kipseli (a neighbouring village), where they settled and started working. They even brought their children from Albania. But, when their employer stopped paying them, they left for Thessaloniki, where they had some relatives[vi].

Let's examine another case. Q. initially went to Koufalia (a village in the Thessaloniki agglomeration) without knowing anybody in particular. However, he knew that several people from his village in Albania had settled there. This is also the case of D., who went directly to Epanomi (Thessaloniki agglomeration) because he knew that he would find several co-villagers there, or at least people from the same district (Gramsh and Elbasan). Indeed, in Epanomi, he found many Albanians, especially the people from his village, with whom D. bonds himself primarily with, whether he knew them from Albania or not[vii].

Another interviewee, E., who lives in Veria, had a similar story to tell: *'several people from Police* [his village of birth] *came to settle in Veria; we are currently rather numerous here. [...] But I especially have contacts with those who belong to my family...'*[viii]

The story of E., who socializes almost exclusively with his relatives, raises an important question when studying Albanians' social networks in Greece: the solidarity and confidence among co-nationals.

In the studies undertaken on Albanian migration, it has been constantly reported that the solidarity and confidence among Albanians in Greece is a subject of controversy. Panos Hatziprokopiou (2003) reports that *'while most* [of his] *interviewees agree that there is a certain degree of support, others believe that reciprocity is not that strong'*. Similarly, Lyberaki & Maroukis (2004: 24) estimate that *'while* [their respondents] *proved so far successful at attaining individual goals, they have been less successful in forging a collectivity on the basis of trust and cooperation"*. They also remark that Albanians come *"from a low trust society'*, meaning that the Albania's previous regime have cultivated mistrust and strong suspicion among Albanians (and even among relatives).

Our findings reveal that when being asked the question 'if Albanians in Greece help each other or not', more than two people out of five answered positively, whereas an important 37% of the sample was dubious, replying *'sometimes yes, sometimes not'*. However, almost one out of five considers that there is no support among the Albanians in Greece.

As an explanation for this, our informants often put forward reasons such as lack of confidence, jealousy and competition among Albanians, insisting on the Albanian cultural characteristics– and also mostly – on the 'hereditary' characteristics, since the 'blood' and 'race' are rather frequently quoted. In the following interview extracts, let us also underline the use of the expression *'the Albanians'* and the pronoun *'they'* in order to refer to the other Albanians without including oneself – a topic which we will elaborate later.

'Ah, the Albanians... Yes, they help each other, but only when it's for doing evil things – stealing or what – never for a good reason. Never will they help each other for doing any good, because they are very jealous of each other, the Albanians [...] "Why Costas has this or that [goods, money...] *and not me? I'll show him, I'll harm him, I'll bother him"... That's how Albanians think...'*

Interview with K, 08-07-2006, Thessaloniki

'It is said that Albanians do not help each other; but there is much jealousy among Albanians:"'why he has a house and not me?" That's how they argue...'

Interview with H., 04-06-2006, Thessaloniki

'In general, Albanians help each other but only among relatives; never the strangers. [...] You cannot understand Albanians: now they like each other and then, after two minutes, there is the brawl...It is like that, by their blood, their race...'

Interview with N, 14-02-2006, Veria, Imathia district

'I only come together with relatives and people from my village in Albania, but mainly with relatives – all of them are cousins. Somebody whom I don't know, I don't really care to get to know him... because, as they say "once bitten, twice shy". So, I am afraid... I do not have confidence. [...] The Albanians sometimes help each other, sometimes not... Cigarettes, some money, food, and that's enough. Then, good-bye...'

Interview with E, 10-06-2006, Potidea, Chalchidiki

These examples are indicative of two different things. On one hand, we could propose that the supposed 'mistrust' among Albanians, and in particular among the Albanians in Greece, seems to condition their relations and consequently their networks, in the sense that a migrant will not easily bind him/herself to non-relatives nor rely on people outside family. The words of A. and G. quoted henceforth demonstrate this idea:

'There exists mutual help among the Albanians. [...] But I do not want to cooperate with Albanians to work – apart from my brother. I do not trust them, I'm afraid... You, you come from there, me from another place. Do I know who you are?'

'The Albanians, I do not want them – I do not trust them. Relatives yes – the rest, no... They are jealous of one another, Albanians: in front of you, everything goes fine, and behind your back... the knife.'

Interview with G., 17-12-2005, Thessaloniki

On the other hand, the supposed "mistrust" among Albanians also affects the size of their social networks; since the latter are primarily kinship networks they will inevitably be of smaller size. Indeed, in the comparative study of Albanians in Italy and Greece, Corrado Bonifazi *et al.* (2005) qualify Albanian networks as more limited and less effective compared to those of other immigrant communities in Italy and Greece.

Besides, research done on Albanian migration in Italy has indeed demonstrated that solidarity of Albanian groups appears to be veryweak. Family ties do seem to prevail over other types of ties (Bonifazi & Sabatino, 2003: 984). According to Resta (1997: 197; quoted in Bonifazi & Sabatino, *op.cit.*) *'Albanians abroad always join into small groups, continuing to apply blood relationships in Italy'*. But, the dominance of family over other types of ties may limit the capacity of creating wider solidarity relationships, and thus exploiting the information and supporting the channels which – in the case of other national communities – have played an important role in several issues, as for instance the start-up and consolidation of independent businesses on an ethnic basis (Ambrosini 2001; quoted in Bonifazi & Sabatino, *op.cit.*).

In brief, for the Albanians in Greece (and in Italy), we can point out that there is an absence of strong and sufficiently wide social networks, i.e. dynamic networks exceeding the close margins of family. Moreover, for many Albanian immigrants, the non- relatives are generally perceived as unreliable. Therefore, migrants seem to be reluctant to offer their solidarity, cooperation, etc. to strangers. Yet, by "family", our

informants delineate the *extended family*, which in many cases can comprise several individuals.

Besides, it is of note that the above observations mainly seem to concern the Albanian migrants that live in Greece with their *nuclear families*, i.e. husbands/wives and children, and not the isolated men that have left their nuclear families at home. The latter seem to identify themselves more with the collective terms, i.e. as integral parts of the 'Albanian group'. The use of *"we, the Albanians"* during their interviews are rather evocative of this. Moreover, this "type" of immigrant seems to show more confidence in the other Albanians than those quoted above. The family bonds are still very important, but the status of these men as isolated persons in Greece seems to alleviate this dichotomy between their co-nationals that are relatives and those that are not. Therefore, they seem more likely to address their solidarity to other compatriots who do not belong to their extended family, meaning that their social networks might be more diverse.

Apart from the social networks examined hitherto, migrants often participate in the more institutionalized groupings such as the associations of immigrants, political and/or religious organizations, etc. A significant number of studies have recorded the very weak participation of Albanians in any kind of ethno-local or national associations, or more generally in the networks of mutual aid. There is also a poor organisational performance on their part (Labrianidis & Lyberaki, 2001; Pratsinakis, 2005), contrary to the practices of other migratory groups in Greece, for instance the Filipinos and the Nigerians (Petronoti, 2001; Gropas & Triandafyllidou, 2005).

As far as our own findings are concerned, 98% of our interviewees are not members of any ethic-local or national association (Kotzamanis, 2006: 13). Besides, the usual reaction of our informants regarding associations, organizations, etc. was either total ignorant of such action (*'I know nothing about it'; 'it never happened to me to hear about those things'*[x], or *'I didn't even know that this kind of stuff existed in*

Thessaloniki…'), or a desire to not to 'meddle' in all this, as if it was something bad or dishonouring (*'me, no never'*[xi]).

This desire could be interpreted, in the first place, by the migrant's will to appear 'like everybody else', i.e. like the Greeks, meaning that despite the fact that s/he is Albanian, s/he does not need to affirm his/her origin in Greece via this type of association. However, we could also see in this attitude a desire to move away from organizations, associations, etc. as a mistrust of this kind of groupings (*'no… never… I don't trust them'*[xii]). This mistrust is not surprising considering that, Albanians – coming from a totalitarian regime – have neither the knowledge nor the culture regarding associations[xiii]. Besides, it has been suggested by some authors (Cf. De Bonis, 2001) that the migrants' tendency of not to associate and their mistrust to this kind of association is also due to the rejection of their communist/collectivist past.

During their research in Athens, Lyberaki & Maroukis (2004: 24) have observed that *'the majority of* [their] *samples expressed lack of trust in their own associations and a reluctance to cooperate with non-relatives in the context of collective forms of representation'*. Moreover, Gropas & Triandafyllidou (2005), having compared the Albanians' attitudes of their little collective participation in public life with those of Bulgarians and Ukrainians (these three countries share similar political experiences under the communist regimes in the post-war era) stress *'the peculiar kind of individualist thinking to which Eastern European Socialism led'*.

Apart from the low participation in such groupings, the existent associations of Albanians show an exceptional fragmentation.In some cases they are even in conflict with one another. Martim Kouka, a member of the Forum of the Albanian immigrants, explains that *'in the past, Albanian associations used to cooperate with each other, but because of the differences in strategy, planning and especially because of individual ambition (everyone wanted to be the 'leader'), they did not succeed in making this collaboration last' (Kouka, 2001: 368)*. Trying to make this clear, Kouka admits, *'the Albanians united?* [...] [That] *is a utopia... » (op.cit., 365, 368)*.

We have experienced the division of the Albanian associations in Thessaloniki. This is rather eloquent when L, a member of the association "Mother Theresa", violently refused to be interviewed by M., who was at that time a member of the 'Association of the Albanians in Thessaloniki'. He agreed to do the interview only if this would be carried out by somebody else. To analyse this, it is probable that this kind of reaction is again related to the issue of trust/mistrust among Albanians, which goes hand in hand with a strong antagonism. In the stories told by our informants, some of which were quoted in the previous section [*Why Costas has this or that and not me?*], this antagonism appears to be the principal explanation for the weak mutual aid among Albanians, and sometimes even between relatives.

Studying the Albanian migration in Italy, De Bonis (2001) makes a similar remark: the fragmentary and competitive nature of Albanian associations in Rome and the migrants' tendency of not to associate is not only due to the rejection of their collectivist past, but also to do with the suspicion towards their compatriots – suspicion that seems to be rooted in the communist regime. Besides, Petronoti[xiv] suggests that "*in spite of their volume, Albanian immigrants are not grouped in organisations, as a result of the competitive relations they maintain with one another and their division in large families,* meaning probably that the extended family discourages the associative life. For Maroukis (2005: 227), also, '*migrant associations [...] come about from networks of trust drawing upon kinship, ethnicity and locality.*' In other words, this type of association '*comes about through informal networks of friends, relatives, co-villagers in the first place.*'

On the whole, for a significant number of researchers, *mistrust* (or rather the absence of trust) as well as *competitiveness* appear to characterize the relations among Albanians in Greece in an important way. Still, confirming this assumption requires a more specific investigation, and certainly a careful study of Albanians' pre-migration history as well as the context of their reception in Greece and Italy.

In any case, it appears that the Albanians in Greece, while they have more or less succeeded in achieving various individual goals, they have not been able – or they have not wanted – to forge a community on the basis of confidence and co-operation (whether institutionalised or not) between their co-nationals.

From a different point of view, a reason to explain the abstention of Albanians from cultural associations is the proximity of Greece to Albania. This geographical proximity is supposed to enable the preservation of cultural and other bonds with the country and culture of origin, which then hinders participation in associations, organizations, etc. This is contrary to the case of the immigrants whose motherlands are far away (Labrianidis & Lyberaki, 2001: 195-197). Regarding the Albanians in Italy, it has also been said that the lack of impulse towards collective groups and associations is largely derived from a feeling of the cultural similarity with the Italian population and, consequently, the absence of the need to affirm the difference via this type of associations (Kelly, 2005: 58).

Neither the geographical nor the cultural proximity put forward the abstention of the Albanians from associating to the collective organizations appears to be persuasive to us. The assumed cultural similarity between Albanians and Italians (or with Greeks), if it is the case, cannot entirely explain their abstention from the institutionalized networks, because the latter do not serve solely cultural goals. Far from simply responding to the migrants' cultural and emotional needs, migrants' social networks reflect the way in which a specific migration is organized in the host country.

We have tried to show that the Albanians' networks in Greece are weak, narrow, and mainly family networks. This means that the Albanians' organization abroad – and therefore their social and professional incorporation etc. into the host country – is mainly achieved through small groups of relatives. Besides, the competitive relations and the mistrust that seem to reign among Albanians – at least according to our informants – further explain the prevalence of small family

networks, as well as the abstention of institutionalized groupings, such as cultural associations and Albanians' organizations. Low participation in such associations and the dominance of family bonds seem to underline an unwillingness to act collectively, as opposed to the practices of other migratory groups such as the Filipinos[xv].

The notion of "community"; attempts of comprehension

For Hatziprokopiou (2005: 201), migrant networks determine the senses of belonging and patterns of membership in a migrant or ethnic/cultural group in both the sending and the host country. Hence, in a certain way, they specify the idea of 'community'-: the migrants' daily life is organised based on these networks; it is, therefore the size of these networks and the type of linkage operated (familial or other) that shape the way in which the immigrant group is structured and thus incorporated in the reception society. This can either happen in a collective – communitarian way, in an individual mode, or in a familial basis, etc.

The notion of community is particularly complex to define. However, since its early history, sociology has been very much concerned of defining the term "community" . The community concept, as developed by Ferdinand Tönnies in his theoretical essay '*Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft'* (Community and society) ([1887] 1957), became the locus classicus in sociology. Tönnies explicitly treats the transition from 'Gemeinschaft' to 'Gesellschaft' in evolutionary terms. He argued that 'Gemeinschaft' represented the childhood of humanity and 'Gesellschaft' its maturity. His breakthrough was to detach himself from the debate of 'the superiority of village and urban ways of life', as well as to attempt to identify the dominant features and qualities of both ways of life. Yet, Tönnies' typological constructs were not based on identification of the decisive defining elements of community but, seemingly, on the largest number of contrasting associations between communal and associative relationships. In this way, 'Gemeinschaft' is associated with the common ways of life,

while 'Gesellschaft' with the dissimilar ways of life; 'Gemeinschaft' with common beliefs, 'Gesellschaft' with dissimilar beliefs; 'Gemeinschaft' with concentrated ties and frequent interaction, 'Gesellschaft' with dispersed ties and infrequent interaction, and so on The main difficulty with this approach is that these qualities do not necessarily line up together on one side of a conceptual divide. This approach invites confusion when defining the coordinates of community, and it encourages the tendency either to romanticize or debunk community (Brint, 2001: 2-3).

For Marx ([1867] 1967), the community or society is the arena within which interest groups compete. Those groups are defined in the basis of their relationship to the means of production. As a result of competition, society is in a constant state of tension (Chavez, 1994: 53).

Emile Durkheim's work represents an important alternative to Tönnies' typology. Durkheim's conceptual approach is to see community as a set of variable properties of human interaction, and not as a social structure or physical entity. This interaction could be found not only among the tradition-bound peasants of small villages, but also among the most sophisticated denizens of modern cities (Brint, 2001: 3). For Durkheim ([1893] 1984), the mutual interdependence of individuals means that they have to rely on the skills and abilities of the others, what then increased social solidarity and cohesion in complex societies.

For Weber ([1947] 1978), on the other hand, the community or society is the locus of expanding bureaucratic power in place of the decreasing individual autonomy. In his approach, community refers to *'a subjective feeling of the parties, whether effectual or traditional, that they belong together'* (*op.cit*., 40).

Since 1950s, the notion of community has become one of the all-encompassing concepts in anthropology and sociology. A wealth of interesting research on communities around the world has thus been produced, drawing upon the previous works of the classical theorists such as Tönnies, Durkheim, Marx and Weber.

The exposition of this vast array of research will take us far beyond the purposes of the discussion of this article.

In a relatively recent work, Steven Brint (2001) tries to identify the structurally distinct subtypes of community by using a small number of partitioning variables. The first partition is defined by the ultimate context of interaction, the second by the primary motivation for interaction, the third by the rates of interaction and location of members, and the fourth by the amount of face-to-face interaction (as opposed to computer-mediated interaction) [see *Figure 1*]. This small number of partitioning variables yields, according to the same author, eight major subtypes of community: (1) communities of place, (2) communes and collectives, (3) localized friendship networks, (4) dispersed friendship networks, (5) activity-based elective communities, (6) belief-based elective communities, (7) imagined communities, and (8) virtual communities. These subtypes include both the most frequently mentioned virtues of communal relations (fraternalism and mutual support, low levels of stratification and power, and informal settlement of disputes) and the most frequently mentioned vices of communal relations (illiberalism and enforced conformity). The aforementioned variables are not universally found to the same degree across community subtypes but rather vary among them.

Brint's typology enables us to take into consideration all the possible meanings that the concept of "community" can take. In this respect, a community might be – among other things – *"a group of people who share criss-crossing affective bonds and a moral culture"* (Etzioni, 2000b: 9). In other words, shared history, identity and fate, are some of the important elements that link people who are said to form a kind of community (or a subtype of community according to Brint's typology). Moreover, the members of a *community* speak the same language, can have the same religious faith, tend to help each other and to support themselves mutually, and aim at building relations of confidence among them, as well as their own methods of social control (Fitzpatrick, 1966: 6).

These precisions regarding 'community' are significant to our analysis. Based on them, we will hypothesize hereafter that the Albanians in Greece are not organised as a distinct immigrant 'community'. Our previous analysis of the Albanian migrant networks in Greece, the weak participation in associations and organisations, and the prevalence of family upon other types of bonds, indicate an individual – or better a familial – organization of the Albanian migration in Greece. Their small and fragmented social networks, their selective solidarity addressed principally to their relatives and the absence of confidence between them, are, all, signs of this non-communitarian organization. We will thus argue henceforth the absence of a distinct Albanian 'community' in Greece.

The absence of an Albanian 'community'

In some migrations the refusal to identify oneself to the migratory wave and to claim a history or a strategy purely individual are very common. Other migrations are explicitly asserted as communities, as is the case of the Tunisian Jews, the Algerians, or the Turks in France (De Rudder, 1987: 122).

The Turks in France, for instance, show a stronger will to organize themselves in a community than the other immigrant populations, especially regarding employment issues (Kastoryano, 1998: 112). We can thus observe the generation of the specific dwelling, trading and exchanging spaces , as well as the emergence of an associative and communicative space responsible for a certain number of activities: the organization of solidarity and worship, the establishment of places to meet the other co-nationals, various publications…The Turkish immigrants in France live and work there, their children study there, but their life is organized in narrow connection with their compatriots, in an interior decoration which is at any time evocative of Turkey. They preserve the original methods of external sociability- thanks to the creation of coffee shops, associations and commercial shops, they are protected from

the "unfaithful" by opening their own places of worship. Thus, in French cities, one expects the regrouping of the Turks in districts where spaces of dwelling, trading and exchanges are quite precise. In short, the Turks cultivate the visibility of their ethnicity, of which they are generally proud of (Petek-Salom, 1998: 88-89).

The case of the Turks in France is emblematic of 'communitarian' migrations, while that of the Yugoslavs in France is the opposite. Veronique De Rudder, in her study of the district of Aligre in Paris remarks that Yugoslavs disperse more and more and do not demonstrate any community life in the district. Their migration assumes a deliberate function of individualization, and it is possible that in their case, it is the question of a collective strategy of prevention against the group's designation (with the stereotypes that generally go with it). The refusal to be self-defined in community terms would then act in order to prevent the hetero-definition – the definition from outside (De Rudder, 1987: 123).

This last point made by De Rudder could partially explain the Albanian's preference for choosing individual insertion into the Greek society and not an insertion rooted in a collective basis as a distinct community. A migratory organization not being communitarian enables the Albanian immigrants in Greece to avoid the very negative stereotypes that go together with the word 'Albanian'[xvi]. Therefore, it is possible that the non-communitarian organization of their migrations is a kind of strategy, in exactly the same way as the community organization is for the Turks in France or elsewhere, a *manoeuvre* to establish their place in the host country.

Immigration status (documented or undocumented) and immigration policies in the host country certainly make a difference to the presence or absence of an immigrant 'community', but the cultural orientations and the pre-migration history of migrants are also very important to this[xvii]. If the Albanian migrations in Greece are not organized in a collective way, this is surely correlated to the generally very hostile social climate of their reception[xviii] and the applied policies which, in general, were rather unwelcoming. However, cultural and historical reasons are involved as well.

The competitiveness in- between Albanians and the supposed mistrust towards their co-nationals who do not belong to their extended family underline the cultural factor.

A salient indication of a migration of *community* or *individual* type is the respective use of *'us'* or *'me'* when the informants were interviewed (De Rudder, 1987: 119). During our interviews with the Albanian migrants, the use of the term *'the Albanians'* or the pronoun *'they'* by our interviewees was striking. The use of these two terms would refer to the generic group of the Albanian migrants in Greece without including the interviewee him/herself. It appears quite explicitly, therefore, that the migrants demonstrate a will to be different from the broad group of *'the Albanians in Greece'*. It is obvious, however, that not *all* the Albanians react in the same way. As aforementioned, some of our interviewees perfectly identify themselves with the group of Albanians.

A certain number of studies on Albanian migration in Greece and Italy (Psimmenos, 2001; Petrakou, 2001: 49; Mai, 2005) have indeed demonstrated that when the interviewed people speak for themselves, they try to differentiate themselves from the rest of the Albanians. Expressions like *'I am not like the other Albanians', 'I am a family man'* and so on are rather typical. As Psimmenos (2001: 190-191) explains such attitudes underline an on-going process of *self-differentiation* which results in that the Albanian individuals break away from their co-nationals. Furthermore, as in the case of the Albanians in Italy, Mai (2005: 553) stresses that the Albanians proceed in a negotiation of their national identity in order to avoid, at the individual level, the bad reputation and the negative stereotypes which go hand in hand with the adjective "Albanian".

Considering all this, we could characterize the Albanian migration in Greece as non-communitarian regardless of the factors – cultural, structural or other – that have influenced such an organization. In other words, according to the definition we have adopted for an immigrant *community* (as part of a comprehensive typology), the Albanians in Greece do not form one. They do not organize themselves in a distinct

and visible community, but rather on an individual/family basis maintained by small networks attached attaching principally to the family bond. This type of migratory organization, apart from the structural elements of the host country, is also related to the previous history of the migratory group in question and to some cultural features inherited by from the previous regime: the mistrust towards non-relatives and individual self-confidence, as well as the antagonism and competitiveness for the (individual) success in Greece.

In this context, the emergence of the great pan-Albanian associations, or even of the associations that would at least gather a sufficient number of members, was apparently not enabled. Direct consequence of this is the fact that no collective claim on behalf of the Albanians in Greece has been recorded, in spite of their large numbers and consequently their potential collective power as a group. This, however, is neither new nor exceptional to the case of Albanian migrants. Gilles De Rapper (2000) observes exactly the same thing for the case of the Albanians in Istanbul, who settled there in the early 20th century. They do not form a "minority" nor do they want to be perceived as such. An intensive assimilation is viewed in order to enable the following generations' better integration into the Turkish society and an upward social mobility. This seems to underline once more the cultural factor.

It is important to note that, regarding the absence of an Albanian *community* in Greece, there are so many societal and cultural differences that mark the local origins[xix] in Albania that *de facto* they would not allow us to speak of an Albanian "*community*" anyhow. Besides, the different temporalities and types of each migration – being in the first or the last migratory wave, the length of sojourn in Greece, migration with or without the nuclear family, etc. – make the Albanian migratory group even more heterogeneous. In other words, due to the great heterogeneity of the Albanians in Greece we cannot talk of an Albanian *community*, not even of one and only Albanian *migration* in Greece, but rather of *migrations*. This, however, does not annihilate our previous analysis; because the preliminary reasons that explain the

great heterogeneity of Albanians are the case in of other migrant groups too. But, contrary to the Albanians, those groups organize their migrations in a more collective way, forming therefore distinctive communities, such as the Filipinos.

Last but not least, we should not consider the less communitarian migrations as unorganized, i.e. as migrations that do not have internal networks; these networks undoubtedly exist (De Rudder, 1987: 122), as it has been shown by examining the Albanian social networks.

Albanians in Thessaloniki: a spatially "'invisible'" migratory group

According to the last Greek census in 2001, the Department area of Thessaloniki accounts forcounts more than one million inhabitants, of which nearly 9% are foreign nationals. The Albanians are by far the most numerous foreign group of in Thessaloniki, accounting for 47% of the city's foreign population and approximately 3% of the city's total population (ESYE, 2001).

The geographic clustering of immigrants of with the same nationality or local place of origin necessarily facilitates the contacts and the communication between individuals, and therefore promotes the organization and the structuring of their communities. But However, the physical proximity and the spatial concentration are not the only factors involved in this process. The organization of an autonomous social space within an immigrant community presupposes the existence of an ethnic infrastructure that offers an alternative to way of insertion in the host country. By ethnic infrastructure it is not only meant meaning the specific commercial facilities, but also a group's own particular services and networks (Taboada-Leonetti, 1984: 66).

We have shown seen from elsewhere (Kokkali 2007 and 2005) that the Albanian immigrants' mode of territorial insertion is not well described by a pattern of ethnic segregation, at least as far as the city of Thessaloniki is concerned. In the geographical scales examined (district, commune, postal code entities), we did not

find any large concentrations of Albanian households in the same areas of the city. Indeed, Albanians, compared to other immigrant groups settled in Thessaloniki (such as Bulgarians), offer a more dispersed prototype within in the urban space. Their spatial distribution is diffused and Albanians themselves seem to be almost omnipresent in the city [see *Figures 2-5*].

As for the ethnic infrastructure, pointed out by Taboada-Leonetti (*op.cit.*), meaning defines it as the special shops, places of worship, clubs, and possibly schools, it seems that unlike the other migratory groups, Albanians do not dispose of any of this. Our observations for the city of Thessaloniki rather corroborate this thesis. Indeed, apart from some translation agencies, we cannot find any other "'ethnic'" services addressed specifically to Albanians, such as cafés or restaurants or even shops selling goods from their country of origin. Even if there are a large number of kiosks where one can find various Albanian newspapers, the owners of those kiosks are – according to our informants – almost exclusively Greeks, or at least they are not Albanians. This is also the case of some coffee-dens where our interviewees often meet their friends or more generally other compatriots.

But, if Albanian restaurants and food shops did not come out in Thessaloniki, this most likely means that there was no reason for it. A mother has told us that during the summer holidays in Albania she brings food from Greece for her children, because they vomit after having Albanian cuisine: the this case is extreme but it rather demonstrates that there is little need for the Albanian food products in Greece[xx]. If, moreover, southern Albania's super-markets are "'flooded'" with by Greek alimentary products, because the ex-immigrants in Greece now returned to Albania prefer Greek food, it suggests that traditional Albanian products may seem superfluous in Greece and maybe the Albanian shops too[xxi]. Trying to explain these phenomena, Hatziprokopiou (2005: 228) estimates that the cultural proximity between Albanians and Greeks does not allow for the emergence of the specialised "'visible'" specialised ethnic businesses.

As for the schools and places of worship reserved to for Albanians, they are simply absent. Albanians send their children to Greek schools, which is contrary, for instance, to the Poles of in Athens who have faced solved the problem of educating their children by launching the Greek-Polish Association, which supports a school with Greek and Polish teachers (Fakiolas, 1999: 220). The Russians also have set up their own school in Athens (Kiprianos, 2002: 12-18).

As for religion, among Albanians, those who practice their religion in Greece attend the Greek church even if they are Muslims [*"'I am a Muslim, but I go to church'"*[xxii]], often declaring declare that *"'God is one and only'"*[xxiii]. In any case, we should note that there is no mosque in Thessaloniki. However, there has been no is neither any claim, on behalf of the Albanian migrants, for the construction of such an edifice, which is contrary to the other foreign Muslim groups, such as the Palestinians (Tsitselikis, 2006: 16-17).

It appears therefore rather plausible to maintain say that the ethnic infrastructure more or less necessary for the organization of an immigrant community is almost completely absent in the case of the Albanians in Thessaloniki. This, combined combining to the diffused distribution of Albanian households in the urban space, advocates a remarkable *spatial invisibility* of Albanians as a group. Compared Comparing to their volume, the Albanians as a group do not provide any visible trace in the city, while no sign of their culture of origin is openly exposed in the urban space, with the exception of the many Albanian newspapers hanging in kiosks. In other words, there is no evidence for an *ethnicization* of urban space, opposite to groups such as the Chinese or the Russians. Considering all this, we could suggest that the Albanians seem to cultivate their *spatial invisibility* as a group.

A last remark is required herein. A study carried out in 2006 from Visoviti *et al.* (2006) on behalf of the Technical Chamber of Greece explores – among other issues – the expressions of the multi-ethnic cohabitation in the public spaces of Thessaloniki. More specifically, the study looks into the two Albanian "piazzas" for

finding a job opportunities, and a central square of the city (the "'Machedonomachon Square'") where a very large presence of Albanian migrants has been observed. We have to underline that those these two expressions of the Albanian immigrants' visibility as a group are not at all what Taboada-Leonetti (*op.cit.*) identifies as *ethnic infrastructure,* since there is neither any service nor any facilities addressed to the Albanian migratory group of Thessaloniki. Moreover, those these spatial expressions of the Albanian presence in the city's space are ephemeral, since they do not affect these areas permanently, namely in the same way as the establishment of *ethnic* restaurants, *exotic* cafés or mini-markets specialised on the products of the country of origin.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have tried to argue that Albanian migrants do not form a "'community'" in Greece, due mainly due to the fragmentation and the small size of their social networks, as well as to their extremely low participation in associations. On the other hand, through the example of Thessaloniki, we have also tried to demonstrate that Albanians as a group do not offer any "'visibility'" into in the urban space. This last fact takes a double expression: a diffused distribution of the Albanian households in Thessaloniki, and the absence of any ethnic infrastructure that would render visible – in spatial terms – the Albanians' presence in the city[xxiv].

The absence of ethnic infrastructure in Thessaloniki seems to underline the individual/family-based insertion of the Albanians into the Greek society. The analysis of the Albanians' social networks has led us to the same conclusion. But if Albanians opt for a more individual insertion into the host society and are not organized in a distinct community, why shouldn't they follow the same process concerning their residential organisation and thus their spatial insertion? In other words, given the organization of the Albanian migrations into is more of the small family networks

rather than a communitarian establishment, it is not surprising that their spatial pattern tends to involves territorial dispersion rather than significant concentration in the urban space and/or ethnicization of any city districts.

Notes

i For more information on the method of selecting our sample from the LSMS data, see the final report of the research programme, Kotzamanis (2006). The *Living Standards Measurement Survey* (LSMS) is a multidimensional panel survey carried out by the World Bank in collaboration with the Albanian Institute for Statistics (INSTAT). The objective of the survey is to provide "photography" of poverty and inequalities in Albania. It is carried out at a household level, but the collection of information concerns both the households and the individuals on subjects like income, consumption, health status and use of health services, education level, demographic characteristics of population (fertility, migration, employment and activity, etc). For more on the *LSMS 2005*, see World Bank &

INSTAT (2003).

ii The LQ is used in order to compare two concentrations of a subgroup: the subgroup's concentration in a geographical unit, compared to the subgroup's concentration in the entire study area. For more on the LQ, see Brown &

 Chung (2006).

iii Indeed, as the Greek example suggests, despite the fact that a great part of Albanian immigrants in Greece during the 1990s were undocumented, their social networks – once initiated – continued to extend. Migration policies, as well as the clandestine status of Albanians did not prevent them from migrating to Greece. Where the policies are important, itIt is certainly in the case of the Albanian women and children where the policies are important. After the two regularisation programmes in 1998 and 2001 and the 2005 law on immigration, which enables family reunions, we can observe a change in the Albanian migration: from a migration of very young males (mainly clandestine), it gradually becomes a documented family migration, and the fluxes start to stabilize. Still, those these policy measures do not seem to have influenced the extension of family networks

 in the 1990s.

iv Interview with Ed., 17-12-2005

, Thessaloniki.

v Interview with L., 22-12-2005

, Thessaloniki.

vi Interview with D., 17-12-2005

, Thessaloniki.

vii Interview with D.,21-12-2005, Epanomi, Thessal

oniki district.

viii Interview with E., 14-02-2006, Veria, Ima

thia district.

ix This interview is drawn from the authors' previous work done on the Albanian migration in Thessaloniki in 2003. See Kokka

li (2003: xx).

x Interviews respectively with N. (14-02-2006, Veria, Imathia district), with E. (14-02-2006, Veria, Imathia district), and with D. (17-12-2005,

 Thessaloniki).

xi Interview with R., 14-02-2006, Episkopi, Im

athia di

strict.

xiii Idem.

xiii For the absence of civil society in Albania and the consequent misunderstanding of the functioning of liberal democracies and their institutions see Mai (2002) and De

 Rapper (1998).

xiv Year of publication

not mentioned.

xv On the communitarian organization of the Filipinos in Greece – the operation of a primary school, a nursery, a church, the existence of "'ethnic'" trade, etc. –, see L Canete (2001: 287-288, 2

90, 295, 297).

xvi For this see Tsoukala (1999: 77-78), Pavlou (2001: 135-137) and Kourtovic (2001). See also how the negative stereotyping of Albanians in Greece and Italy have generated phenomena of detachment of the global group of 'Albanians' in Mai (2005) and Psimmenos (2

001: 190-191).

xvii The case of the Albanians in Britain, where the so-called 'multiculturalism' is practiced, is very different from the ones in Greece and Italy. The development of several Albanian action groups in London (as for instance the Albanian Youth Action) and the claim of the Albanian parents for educating their children in their mother tongue (Kostovicova, 2003) reinforce a hypothesis of the Albanians' more collective organisation in Great Britain, as well as the importance of the structural factor. Still, the fact that the Albanians in Britain come mainly from Kosovo and Macedonia and at in a lesser extent from Albania (while Albanians in Greece come uniquely from Albania) underlines the cultural factor and the pre-migration hi

story as well.

xviii See for instance the image of the "Albanian" in the Greek media during the 1990s, in Pavlou (2001)

soukala (1999).

xix See De Rapper, 2004,

2002 and 2000.

xx Interview with S., 15-1262005

, Thessaloniki.

xxi During a trip to Albania, we have been able to find out that the southern Albania's supermarkets are abundantly provided with Greek food products (and not only) products; the shop-keeper explained that that's due to the demand expressed from the migrants in Greece returned b

ack to Albania.

xxii Interview with M., 20-12-2005,

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niki.

xxiv Idem

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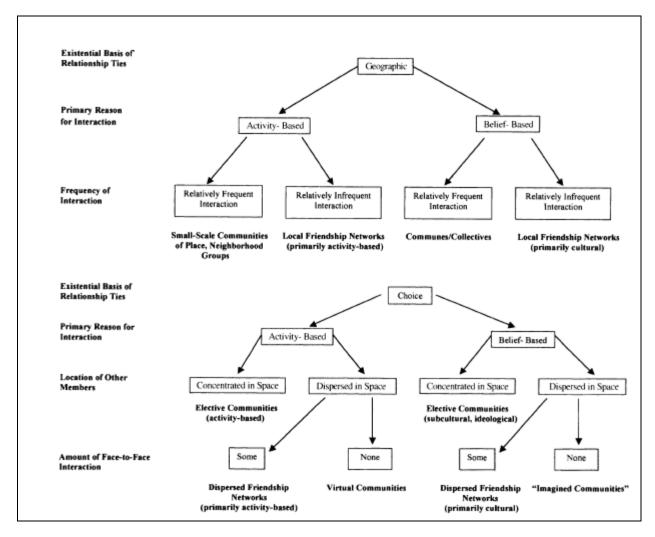
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Figure 1: Community types

Source: Brint (2001:10).

Figure 2: Albanian immigrants in greater Thessaloniki (Thessaloniki conurbation and the adjacent communes/ community level)
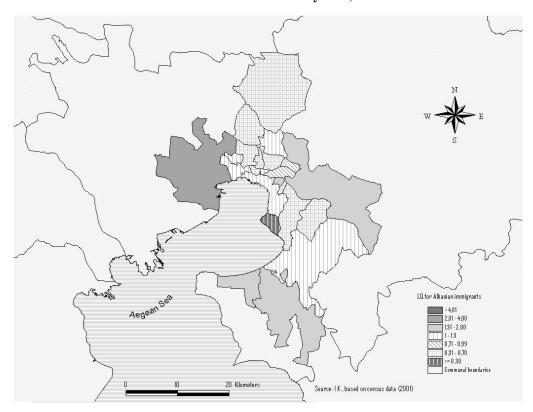

LQ for Albanian immigrants

> 4,01
2,01 - 4,00
1,31 - 2,00
1 - 1,3
0,71 - 0,99
0,31 - 0,70
<= 0,30
Communal boundaries

Aegean Sea

0   10   20 Kilometers

Source: I.K., based on census data (2001)

Figure 3: Bulgarian immigrants in greater Thessaloniki (Thessaloniki conurbation and the adjacent communes/ community level)

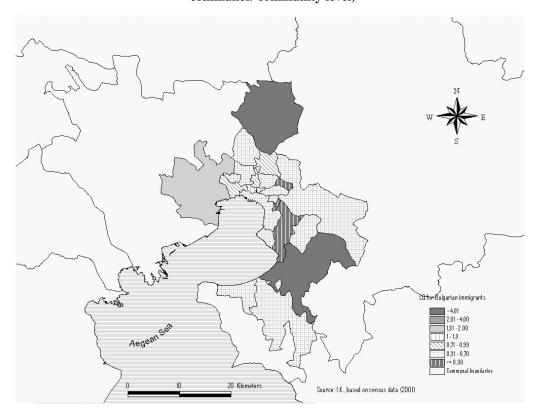Source : I.K., based on census data (2001)

Figure 4: Albanian immigrants in Thessaloniki Conurbation (postal code unities)
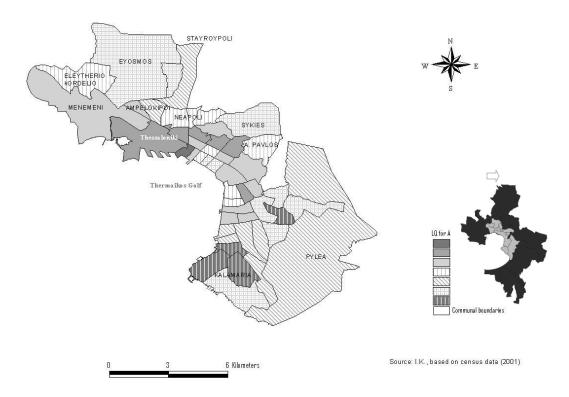

Figure 5: Bulgarian immigrants in Thessaloniki Conurbation (postal code unities)