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An exploratory analysis of the experiences, motivations and expectations of Albanian migrants in Portugal through the prism of human security

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SOCIOLOGIA
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Abstract

Since the end of the Cold War and the fall of the communist regime in Albania, migration has become a key issue for the country. In 2019, it was estimated that more than 1.2 million Albanians were living abroad, accounting for almost one fifth of its working force. As a result, emigrant remittances represent almost 20% of the country's GDP. Against that backdrop, this thesis sets out to explore the experiences, motivations and expectations of Albanian migrants living in Portugal. While there is a growing number of works that focus on immigrant communities in Portugal, up until now none of them has focused on this topic. The thesis starts by putting this subject within a broader context and laying out the social, political and economic factors contributing to the several waves of Albanian migration that followed the end of the communist regime. Following from that, the argument will analyse the literature studying the dynamics of Albanian migration to countries such as Italy, Greece, and the United Kingdom. In the second chapter, it will explore the literature on Portugal as a host country for migrants regarding by briefly exploring the cases of migrants coming from Eastern European countries. The third chapter outlines the core assumptions of human security, the theoretical framework adopted to conduct this study, and explains the methodological choices that supported the collection, analysis and interpretation of primary data, that relied on the method of semi-structured interviews. Finally, the thesis discusses the experiences, motivations and expectations of four Albanian migrants living in Portugal. In doing so, the thesis hopes to make a modest contribution to current debates about migrant integration in Portugal and highlight the importance of engaging with smaller migrant communities in Portugal that are often overlooked by the literature.

Key words: Albania; Migration; Human Security

Resumo

Desde o fim da Guerra Fria e o colapso do regime comunista na Albânia, a migração tornou-se uma questão fundamental para o país. Em 2019, foi estimado que o número de cidadãos albaneses a viver no estrangeiro seria superior a 1,2 milhões, representado cerca de um quinto da população em idade ativa. Neste contexto, esta tese tem como objetivo analisar as experiências, motivações e expectativas dos migrantes albaneses a residir em Portugal através de entrevistas semiestruturadas. Embora haja um crescente número de trabalhos académicos que se debruçam sobre as comunidades migrantes em Portugal, até agora nenhum deles analisou este tema. A tese começa por colocar este assunto dentro de um contexto mais amplo, explorando os fatores sociais, políticos e económicos que contribuem para as várias ondas de migração albanesa. Em seguida, analisará a literatura que estuda a dinâmica da migração albanesa para os seus principais países de destino como Itália, Grécia e Reino Unido. A partir disso, a tese explorará a literatura sobre Portugal como país de acolhimento de migrantes, explorando brevemente o caso de migrantes provenientes de países do Leste Europeu. O terceiro capítulo irá delinear os principais pressupostos da segurança humana, a abordagem teórica adotada para a realização deste estudo, e explicará as escolhas metodológicas que orientaram a recolha, análise e interpretação de dados, o método de entrevistas semiestruturadas. Por fim, a tese discute as experiências, motivações e expectativas de quatro migrantes albaneses que vivem em Portugal. Ao fazê-lo, contribui para as discussões sobre a integração dos migrantes em Portugal e destaca a importância de se envolver com comunidades migrantes menores em Portugal que muitas vezes são negligenciadas pela literatura.

Palavras-Chave: Albânia, Migração, Segurança Humana

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Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War and the fall of the communist regime in Albania, migration has become a key issue for the country. Since that moment, three waves of mass migration took place often reflecting important social and political changes in the country. In 2019, it was estimated that more than 1.2 million Albanians were living abroad, accounting for almost one fifth of its working force (Unicef, nd). As a result, emigrant remittances represent almost 20% of the country's GDP (Gedeshi, 2002). Human insecurities, ranging from economic, to social and physical insecurity are widely accepted as the main factors influencing their decision to leave, whilst the prospects of a better life, access to education, employment opportunities or healthcare remain some of the most important drivers of Albanian migration (Vullnerati, 2012). At the same time, during recent years Portugal become the host country for a growing number of migrants. The latest Report on Immigration, Borders and Asylum published by the Aliens and Borders Service (SEF) estimates that more 770,000 foreign citizens currently live in Portugal (Estrela et al., 2021). In contrast, official numbers point that in 2000 there were around 210.000 migrants who had chose Portugal as a host country (Góis and Marques, 2018). In the short space of two decades, Portugal thus registered a fourfold increase in the number of foreign citizens.

Naturally, this trend not only created new challenges and opportunities for the host country, but it also paved the way for a growing academic interest in understanding the push and pull factors that underly this process. However, most of this research has been predominantly focused on large immigrant communities in Portugal or, alternatively, on trends that characterise migration towards Portugal. Regarding the later, and focusing on the excellent book collection published by the Portuguese High Commission for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue, there are some studies exploring the dynamics that characterize the growing number of elders moving to Portugal (Machado, 2010), how immigrants have been socially constructed by the Portuguese media (Costa, 2010), the gendered dynamics of transnational marriages between Portuguese and Brazilians (Raposo, Toghi and Roldão, 2009), or the broader evolution of Portuguese immigration policies (Carvalho, 2009). Regarding the former, there are also studies that explore the integration of Ukrainian migrants within Portugal (Baganha, Marques and Góis, 2009),

the integration of migrants from Cape-Verde in the Portuguese job market (Góis, 2006), the multiple layers and contrasting dynamics of this community (Góis, 2008), the challenges and trajectories of their children within the Portuguese education system (Casimiro, 2008; Pires, 2009), but also, and more directly related to my case study, the expectations and integration of Eastern European migrants in specific regions of the country (Castro, 2008; Dionísio, 2009). Still, and despite the major contributions put forward by this line of work, the fact that some immigrant communities in Portugal are statistically insignificant should not mean that their journeys, livelihoods and prospects should be considered academically or even politically irrelevant.

Against that backdrop, this thesis seeks to offer the first exploratory study of the experiences, motivations and expectations of Albanian migrants living in Portugal. The Albanian community in Portugal is relatively small. According to official data, in 2020 there are only 85 Albanians currently living in Portugal (GEE, 2022). The same cannot be argued in relation to the substantive number of Albanians living in countries such as Greece, Italy or the United Kingdom. This, however, has also meant that up until now there has been little or no concern with studying smaller Albanian communities, if that is even the correct word to use, living abroad.

Given the small number of Albanians in Portugal and the intention to better understand their life trajectory and experiences, this thesis is theoretically anchored to the idea of human security. In contrast with the more conventional understanding of security, the notion of human security takes individuals and communities, rather than the state or the international system as the main object of analysis (UNDP, 1994). It suggests that security is not only about preserving the territorial integrity of a state but first, and most importantly, about reducing the insecurities that systematically condition the well-being of individuals across the world. Seeking to flesh out individual perceptions of human (in)security and their interconnections with the life trajectories of these migrants, the study adopted the qualitative strategy of semi-structured interviews as method to collect, analyse, and interpret the data. On the one hand, semi-structured interviews allow us to ensure that similar aspects of their journey and experience in Portugal are raised and discussed; on the other, they allow to explore some details that are relevant for the participants but were not anticipated by the researcher (Brymann, 2016).

This thesis is divided in four chapters. The first chapter will be exploring Albanian history and its recent migration trends. It will start by explaining the dictatorship under that lasted until the 1990s and, following from that, discusses the three major waves of Albanian migration that began in the same period. Underlying this chapter is an interest in understanding the social, economic and political factors that have pushed Albanians to flee from their country. After explaining the broader context of those who moved, we then look at the context of those who host them. Hence, the second chapter will focus on Portugal, aiming to understand the growing importance of immigration for this relatively small but appealing country. To do so, the chapter will explore the historical context and the literature on migrants in Portugal from Eastern European countries. The third chapter will introduce my theoretical framework and research methods. It will explain the meaning of human security and its link to both migration and the Albanian case. Following from that, I briefly introduce the qualitative method of semi-structured interviews. I will explain how the interviews have been carried out and how the data was collected and interpreted. The fourth and final chapter will analyse and discuss the interviews conducted with four Albanian migrants living in Portugal. In doing so, this thesis seeks to answer the broader research question orienting this project: How has human (in)security shaped the expectations, experiences and motivations of Albanian migrants living in Portugal?

Chapter 1

Albania as a migration country: historical background and current trends

This chapter will contextualize Albanian migration. It will start by exploring Albanian history in order to help us understand the broader the social, political and economic factors that contribute to the various waves of Albanian migration. First, it will explore the communist period that lasted 45 years and during which many Albanians tried to escape but rarely succeeded. It will then analyse how Albanian migration evolved after the dictatorship. The second section of this chapter analyses secondary literature that explores Albanian migration towards Greece, Italy, and the United Kingdom. This, in turn, will allow us to map some of the academic works produced on this topic but also, and based on that, contrast them with the insights provided by Albanian migrants living in Portugal.

1.1. Historical context: communism, dictatorship and the end of an Era

To make sense of contemporary migration from Albania, it is crucial to understand the broader geographical, historical, and political context of this country. Albania is located in the Balkan peninsula and its extensive coast is bathed by the Adriatic and Mediterranean Sea. With 3.2 million habitants, Albania has borders with four other countries Greece, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Kosovo, Albania's history can be traced back to the third century before Christ. By that time the Roman empire had taken control over their territory, and it has stayed that way until the 19th century when they started to rediscover and connect more with the West. On the 28th of November 1912, Albania finally became independent, after many years under the Ottoman Empire (BBC, 2018). Since Albania's independence, Greek nationalists have often argued that the borders between the two countries were not defined properly, leading to a dispute over its limits. Considering that both countries had different views on this matter, this situation was discussed in the London and Paris conferences in 1913.

During those conferences, several matters were discussed such as the language spoken in the areas being disputed, religion, economic and geographical interests. The London Peace Conference eventually decided in favour of Albania. In 1921 the decisions made were re-analysed in the Paris conference and the verdict was the same as in 1913. Even though Albania has always been a nationalist country, it was only once the Ottoman Empire was no longer in power that Albanians were able to embrace their language and traditions that had long been out of use. Still, the identity of Albania has always been a sensitive topic. This reflects the multiple influences that have been present in the country throughout history.

Enver Hoxha founded the Party of Labour of Albania, the Communist Party that rose to power in 1944 (Chamberlain, 2019). The main concern for the party was not only to establish an Albanian identity, but to forge a strong sense of nationalism and patriotism. The first measures implemented consisted in a series of social and land reforms seeking to help build a homogeneous society (Lula, 2021). However, since Albania was a country with distinct traditions in different regions, the communist government rapidly realized that unifying the country would be harder than they originally thought (Lula, 2021). The northern and southern regions of country had contrasting ways of living and thus the government knew that in order for communism to thrive, there would be a need to isolate the country completely from the world, so that the external information would not reach the citizens and compromise the system (Lula, 2021). This period, often known as one of the darkest moments of Albania's history, was marked by the death, imprisonment, and persecution of more than 100 thousand people who were against the government.

During this period, the *Sigurimi i Shtetit* (State Security) was the institution that supervised not only if the party members and ordinary citizens were plotting against the government but also if their morals were consistent with the ideas expressed in the communist manifest. As some authors point, once they had suspicions about someone it would be reported and then they would be arrested for interrogation (Lula, 2021). In addition to that, the state security monitored phone conversations and mail. Members of the government, military, and intelligence agencies of individuals closely associated with Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union and China were also on their spying list. The Albanian government decided to cut ties with the world and become isolated. This led Albania to

become one of the poorest countries in the world, which would latter help to explain the thousands of migrants fleeing the country (Tarifa, 1995).

During this period, the Communist Party used various tactics to try to implement the communist principles in the society. The story of Skanderbeerg, the first solo ruler of Albania, a warrior who fought for Albania against de Ottoman Empire back in the 14th century, was strongly instrumentalized by Hoxha who wanted to link it with the history of communist party in the country. Often, this story was utilized to justify that the governance of Albania was their natural right. Albanians had no communication with the other countries to prevent a revolution that could end the regime (Tarifa, 1995). The first reforms done by the communist party were mainly focused on infrastructures, education, and the media. Before the road and land rehabilitation the communication between citizens was nearly impossible, thus creating a division between different regions and, consequently, limiting the formation of an homogenous community and identity (Tarifa, 1995).

During this period, media outlets, newspapers, television, and literature were turned into instruments for a mass campaign in favour of an all-united Albania, which increased the public sense of nationhood. A new education program was also installed in order to teach children since a very young age the sense of unity and devotion to their country (Draper, 1997). Albanian literature was the tool most widely used to promote nationalist principles. There, citizens could find the major thoughts and rules that good Albanians should follow in order to honour their nation. It was also trough literature that the connection between the great warrior Skanderbeg and the communist party was fully developed, making it seem that for the last five hundred years the Albanian citizens had been oppressed by the foreigners and that they are very pacific people who just want their own freedom without outside intervention, this idea romanticized the communist party emergence (Draper, 1997).

Even though Albania was under the communist wing, the lack of unity in the country was still present, and it was the biggest threat to the communist party. Albania was highly polarized. The country was divided between rural and urban areas, the wealth discrepancies started to become noticeable, so there were very wealthy and then extremely poor citizens (Tarifa, 1995). Albanian society developed under the influence of different empires throughout the years and, as a result, there was religious diversity,

was seen by the communists as a barrier to unify the nation. To the government, it turned the Muslim against the Christians, and neither one of these groups was willing to give up on their faith (Draper, 1997). The communist government tried to incorporate in their view of what an Albanian citizen is, all the characteristics that were spoken in the 1921 conference about the Albanian nation and their inhabitants, they were quite successful, but were still struggling with religion, so in 1967 Albania became the first Atheist country in the world. Because if there was no religion there would be no more blood feuds and division, and just like that Albania would finally become a united nation, something that had been envisioned since 1944 (Draper, 1997).

One of the main goals of the communist leadership was to the standard of living among the citizens. However, in this specific case it was harder than what they originally thought. The rural areas were still underdeveloped, and poor compared to the urban areas, the communist party had already collectivized the land, but there was still little people willing to stay in the rural side, tax incentives for the citizens to remain and work were given. Overall, these measures helped a little but these agrarian lands stayed always more undeveloped than the rest of the country (Draper, 1997). In 1947 in northern Albania a rebellion against the government started but was soon ended by the regime. These acts continued throughout the country in the following years.

1.2. The fall of the communism and the beginning of a new Era for migration

The Communist Era lasted until the 11th of December of 1990 (Lula, 2021). For the first time in four decades the borders of Albania were open to the world and Albanians were finally allowed to leave the country. Albania has always been a country on the run, with various flows of migration. The beginning of communism gave an impulse for Albanians to try and escape the country in order to find better living conditions, even if this meant fleeing illegally, risking getting caught and face several punishments (Lula, 2021). After the end of communism, a new migration era started. Between 1990-2000 around 600 thousand people had left Albania, many of them permanently. Considering that the country had little over 3 million people this migration wave had a tremendous impact on the economy (Arrehag, Sjöberg, & Sjöblom, 2006). In 1992 Albania joined the Organization of the Islamic conference (OIC). This decision was not well accepted by the citizens that wanted to feel more included in Europe and not in the Islamic community, but the then president Berish justified his decision with needing all the economic help

that was possible. After many years under the communist wing the economy was completely ruined. (Arrehag, Sjöberg, & Sjöblom, 2006).

The migration waves that took place in Albania between 1990-2002 had a major impact on the country and agitated an already weak and unstable economy. There are two key factors that had major implications for the country: first, the movements that occurred from the rural to the urban part of the nation left agricultural lands deserted; second, the migrants that left Albania were between 18-45, an age gaps that includes the best working years of the population, when people are healthier and stronger physically (Carletto, Davis, Stampini, & Zezza, 2006). Nonetheless, some positive results also resulted from this process. For instance, migrants would send some remittances back home, improving the household's income, and the ones who came back would bring with them new innovative ideas, and knowledge that the country was desperately in need (Carletto, Davis, Stampini, & Zezza, 2006).

1.3. Major trends in Albanian migration: insights from the literature

1.3.1. Albanian migration towards Italy: the search for the Italian lifestyle

Although migration has consistently been a key issue for Albania since the fall of communism, there are three periods that are crucial to understand the recent trends in Albanian migration: the first took place between 1990 and 1992, the second between 1997 and 1998, and the last between 2001 and 2002. The first migration peak was registered in 1992 and resulted from years imprisoned in their own country. Albanians were now finally free to cross borders and wander through the world, making this the first flow of migration in the post communism Era (Carletto, Davis, Stampini, & Zezza, 2006). Trough out this period entire families moved from the agriculture side to the main cities and even migrated to other countries.

In the beginning of the post-communist Era there was a huge political instability due to the urgent need to establish a democratic government, the economy was completely shattered and there was a lot of social vulnerability, all of these factors combined lead to the migration of almost 300,000 thousand Albanians in only two years (Arrehag, Sjöberg, & Sjöblom, 2006). Most of these migrants selected Greece and Italy as their final

destination since it was closer to their home country, and it would be easier to start a new life from the scratch. Even though after 1992 both the economy and political condition stabilized the migration influx did not stop, but there was a stable period with less movements (Arrehag, Sjöberg, & Sjöblom, 2006).

After this, between 1997-1998 there was a civil war as a consequence from the collapse of a series of pyramid schemes. People had made around 2 million deposits into these schemes that promised a 40% monthly return of what they invested, this represented more than a half of the Albanian GPA (Carletto, Davis, Stampini, & Zezza, 2006). A lot of people lost everything from money, houses, cars, savings. This internal conflict killed around 2000 people and gave an impulse for the second big wave of migration, because Albanians were desperate after being left with barely anything, and more than 100000 people saw fleeing as the only option (Carletto, Davis, Stampini, & Zezza, 2006).

Although in 2001-2002 the economy had already recovered from the previous crises and was becoming steady, a third wave of migration was triggered, it is only known that during that specific year a mass flow of habitants decided to leave their country, trying to find better conditions for themselves (Arrehag, Sjöberg, & Sjöblom, 2006). In 2001, 26% of all the residence permits in Italy were due to family reunification and it was estimated that 164000 Albanians were living there. However, in Greece the number of migrants is extremely higher, in 2001 around 545000 Albanians had work and residence permits, this happened due to the proximity to the country, since it is easier to cross a border. During this time period a lot of Albanians also migrated not only to other European countries but also to the United States and Canada (Carletto, Davis, Stampini, & Zezza, 2006).

After the end of the communist Era, the Albanian citizens felt an urge to flee and broaden their horizons, since the economy was crumbling, the Albanians did not had much money, so there was the need to flee to closer destination where it would not be needing a big investment. Greece and Italy were the main roots in the nineties.

Italy was one of the main final destinations chosen for several reasons, firstly its proximity made it very desirable, secondly Italian television was watched religiously by the Albanians they dreamt of the Italian lifestyle that was portrayed on the tv shows, and thirdly they believed that the integration into the society would be easier rather than in any other country. (Mai, 2004)

Between 1991-1992 almost 50000 Albanians crossed the Adriatic Sea in overloaded ships and boats hoping for the Italian dream, upon arrival they were given refugee status. After 2001, illegal migrants started to get deported, due to the massive migration flows. Almost 1500 Albanians were coming to Italy every month and it was impossible to accommodate and control. In that decade it is estimated that 250000 migrants fled to Italy, in 2007 the Albanian migrant's community was the third largest, only losing to Moroccans and Romanian. (Mai, 2004)

As it was previously stated there were three important moments in Albania's migration history, and those periods have brought different types of migrants so it is important to acknowledge that, in order to understand the types of migration in Italy. Migration to Italy is known to be sought for long term placement, while in Greece to be temporary/ seasonal jobs to bring an extra income. Mostly the migrants are between 18-45 years old, 90% men tend to go first and find jobs, and once they are settled and consider it is safe their wives and children go to meet them, half of the women who migrate is in order to reunite with their partner, and only one third is goes all by themselves to find a better job. (Mai, 2010) Albania was a young country with lots of youth but throughout the years the population who is in the best working years has been escaping leaving behind the older and the very young generations who are not able to contribute for the country's growth. Italy has been using Albanians for cheap labour that leads to their country's own development, strangely this also benefits the country of origin because the money sent to the families back home helps the PIB growth, reducing the poverty. (Mai, 2010)

However, adapting to a new country, culture and language is always a challenge, especially if in the destination country there are already misconceptions about certain ethnicities. In Italy the hate towards Albanians has been instigated by the press, media, they were portrayed as outsiders and threats to the nation, the word 'albanophobia' was born. Parents encouraged their children to speak Italian in school and public to fit in more within the society. Even though Albanians suffered with the prejudice against them, they were still able to integrate very easily into society due to spreading all over Italy and not focusing the community all in one place, from the rural regions to the main cities and island, they can be found everywhere. (Mai, 2010)

Regarding their lives in Italy, Albanian children enrolled in schools has risen every year, and in 2006 they were the largest migrant community registered in the Italian public

schools. When it comes to university most students are already second migrants' generation, meaning that most of them are born in Italy but their parent's are Albanian, having both Italian and Albanian citizenship. (Mai, 2010) Once migration to Italy increased, the mixed marriages between Albanians and other ethnicities also did, one in ten Albanians married someone not from their country, however comparing to the rest the marriage the rates of the other citizens, Albanians were still low due to the stigma and prejudice against them, Italian families did not want their children marrying someone they disapproved. Although this was frequent, once the migration become steady and Albanians started to have stable and legal jobs the preconception against them started to shift. (Mai, 2010)

Even though some entire households migrated, they would still send remittances to the ones who stayed behind, in order to improve the condition of the family members who decided to stay in Albania. During the 90s it is estimated that the Albanians who were abroad sent around 1 billion euros per year to family members back in their hometown, one person with a good income in a foreign country could support the minimum of 5 people in Albania, so the remittances became much needed in the Albanians economy. Once the migrants started their own families abroad, the money available to send was less and the economy suffered some damage. (Mai, 2010)

Returning migration is a generating issue in Albania, the lack of security, infrastructures and lack of a stable economy, makes Albanian rethink several time before taking any decisions. Since they are already well integrated in Italy and their children do not intend to come back, the problems their own country has, makes it unattractive to go back. Migrants who return feel that it is hard to reintegrate and that there is a lack of support for people in this situation, since the wages are extremely low, the economy unsteady and it is complicated to invest in businesses due to the lack infrastructures, it is complex for Albanians to even rethink about coming home. (Mai, 2010)

If Albania wants to allure their habitants back there is a need to invest in their own country first, and create attractive solutions that will develop the country and appeal to investors, not only to Tirana but also to the other parts of the country who are more uninhabited and underdeveloped. Return migrants from Italy have higher education than those from Greece, and the explanation is easy, in Greece the jobs are seasonal and more precarious, such as agriculture, manufactures jobs that do not require a lot of skills, while Italy is

wanted for long term migration, the jobs are less precarious and there is a margin to grow withing the job and obtain more expertise. (Mai, 2010)

However, in general it can be seen that the Albanians who migrate to Italy are mostly man who have higher education and want a place to settle and construct a peaceful life, and that males normally go first and only then the family follows if it is safe. Italy is also chosen for its geographical location and easy accessibility specially after the communist the citizens were very poor and needed to flee without spending much money. Poverty, social discontent, lack of infrastructures, political instability are the main reason that lead Albanians to migrate and these same reason are the one who keep them from returning. Even though Albanian integrated very effortlessly, they still faced a lot of mistreatments due to the misconception that the Italians, because the media treated them like criminals who do not deserve to be in their country and only want to steal their jobs. The second generation of migrants are encouraged to be brought up as Italian hiding their backgrounds, and act as true Italians. Overall, after the communism era ended Italy was an easy get way country for the thousands of Albanians who had been imprisoned for the last 45 years, and need a new start and indirectly helped Albania rebuild due to the remittances that were send by the migrants.

1.3.2. Albanian migration towards Greece: crossing the forbidden border

When the Iron Curtain fell, the closest border was Greece, it offered a great and steady economy, the culture was quite similar, it needs migrants for low-income jobs and most important there was not the need to have spent a lot of money (Lazaridis & Koumandraki , 2007). It is estimated that more than 600000 Albanians migrated to Greece, around 1998 there was a programme to regularize the migrants' situations, 65% of the applicants were from Albanian origin, making them the major migrant group and second biggest community in Greece, the government even called it an 'Albanian crisis' (Lazaridis & Koumandraki , 2007). The stigma that was created around the Albanians affected their stay, from drug- smuggler, prostitution, murderers, thefts, to mafia gangs, their image was damaged and their opportunities condemned, as in Italy, the term 'albanophobia' was also used by the Greeks, to describe the hates and phobia against these migrants, they became the race who most suffered from xenophobia and attacks (Lazaridis & Koumandraki , 2007).

When fleeing to Greece it was almost implied that the job, will most certainly not be according to their education levels or skills, the migrants will be stationed in low-income jobs that the Greeks do not want to do, social inclusion is harder not only because of the stigma but also because it is hard to find a migrant with a socially approved job, doctors, accountants, lawyers (Lazaridis & Koumandraki , 2007). Albanians who migrate and have a personal network in Greece, who helps them and gives them information have an easier access to finding a job, housing, and also support, someone to relay on that is already integrated and knows how the things work in the new country (Lazaridis & Koumandraki , 2007). However, the biggest problem that is faced is the legalization of the migrants, the ones who are illegal cannot find a formal job, are not eligible to social security and do not have any political rights even if they have been there for several years.

In Greece some most of the migrants around 40% are trapped in part-time jobs, low incomes, and illegal work, because if they ask their employer to legally employ them, they will be fired and they cannot have the luxury to have no job since the family back home is counting on them. (Lazaridis & Koumandraki , 2007).

In general Albanians who migrate to Greece have less education and skills, most of the jobs, that they are eligible to are not prestigious because the Greek citizens want more than working seasonal jobs such as agriculture tourism, fishing, domestic servant, and for the employers it is better to have migrants perform the work, lower wages, no social security expenses , safety or health coast, in the end they get the job done and earn more. (Lazaridis & Koumandraki , 2007). Since they are not legally in the country the Albanians cannot be a part of the society, they are not allowed to participate in politics, enrol in the public sphere jobs and labour unity groups. Women mostly take on the house sphere work and care work, while men face the hardest jobs who require more strength. Even skilled workers as lawyers, teachers do not try to find job that matches their capacity, because they are warned if they do a lower skilled job, they can bring home more money. The Albanians are stigmatized both in Italy and Greece, the media portrays them as cruel and dangerous individuals, this leads them to be exclude by the society out of fear. Parents do not want families to have any strings with the race, and marginalize them.

The post-communist era was an Era of discoveries specially for the Albanians who had been deprived from knowing the world. Once they were able to leave, they migrated to

find better conditions for themselves, in the first decade they choose Italy and Greece to start their new lives and finally earn some money since poverty was all they knew.

1.3.3. Albanian migration towards the United Kingdom: following the British dream

The years have passed but Albanians Migration continued a constant problem. The reasons remain the same, but the destination gradually changed. Migrants have now an higher level of education and want to find a job that not only fits their skills but will also fulfil them at the financial level. The 2008 Greek crisis and the 2011 Italian crisis left the economies down so the Albanians changed their roots to more stable and powerful countries Germany, UK, USA. In 2010 the visa liberation has helped the movement of people, since for 90 days there is no need of a visa to wander in the Schengen (Veshi & Da Molin, 2020).

For the past decade the migration routes have changed if in the years after the communism it were Italy and Greece the preferred destinations now the migrants are turning to Germany and United Kingdom. The reasons to migrate in from 2010 to 2020 are not the same as in 1990. First of all, more than 40% of the Albanian population is living abroad (Veshi & Da Molin, 2020), this meaning that at least 1 million Albanians are spread around Europe. Albania has always been a country on the move due to its huge flows of migration, it had quietened down for a few years, after 2010 it has increased rapidly but this time the consequences were more noticeable because the migration of educated people with scientific degrees has risen, this has caused a huge pressure on the country.

Granting all of these between 2010-2011 it is estimated that 31,3% of Albanians who have higher education were living abroad. Albania is spending huge amounts of money in their youth education but not collecting its profits, because the country is unable to provide conditions for them to stay (Veshi & Da Molin, 2020). Nowadays due to all the technology and interconnected world it is not much needed to migrate, a trip can be booked within seconds and without spending much money, and in a matter of days migrants will be in their destination without a lot of trouble, and once they are there it is easier to deal with the bureaucracy and paperwork to stay legally permanently (Veshi & Da Molin, 2020).

Trough out the years, migration has become easier and rich countries have become the main attraction, that is why since 2010 the Albanians have shifted their routes mostly to

Germany, 2014-2015 was the peak of asylum requests. This sudden change of path has to do with the attractiveness and what the host country has to offer. However, in the case of Germany, the economy is very stable something that allows an improvement of living conditions not only now but for the future generations with high salaries, healthcare, peaceful environment, while Greece and Italy since the 2008 crisis cannot offer that (Veshi & Da Molin, 2020).

Even though Albanians are in the safe list of origin country which makes it easier for them to enter, only 65 out of 53,805 of decisions about the asylum were positive, because the process is very complicated and hard to obtain and most of the migrants thought that this process would be easier, and some were allured by fake job propositions online. (Veshi & Da Molin, 2020).

Out of the vast majority of Albanian migrants that have higher education try their best luck in Germany, the ones that stand out the most are the doctors and health workers for several reasons. In order to practice medicine in other country there is the need to have a certificate called "Certificate of good behaviour" this document is provided by the order of the doctors of the migrant's country to prove that the person is a certified doctor and that during the time working there are no disciplinary actions against (Veshi & Da Molin, 2020). There has been an increase in the issue of these certificates since 2013, in this year there were issued 76 general practitioners in 2017 the number had doubled there were 175 general practitioners and 32 specialist doctors. These numbers are alarming since every year 150 doctors graduate from Tirana's medical university and the number of doctors who want to leave the country is the same or even higher, this results in Albania having a very deficient health care system and a very low rate of doctors per inhabitant, affecting the Albanian population at the most because some rural areas have almost no access to specialist doctors. (Veshi & Da Molin, 2020). Albania is losing the opportunity to grow as a country and throwing away the money spent with their citizens' education and knowledge that will be used by other countries.

The tendency to study abroad has increased over the years, the number of Albanians requiring this permit has grown specially in Germany, this is a clever way to get easier access to a country. After the end of the studies the Albanian students already have spent around four years living in Germany and are fully adapted to the country and asking for a work permit will be less troubled (Veshi & Da Molin, 2020). This creates some

challenges for Albania, since the youth and young adults who are in their prime working age leave the country in order to find better conditions, and their own country is left behind lacking specialized workers who are essential for development of a nation (Veshi & Da Molin, 2020).

It is estimated that 150.000 Albanians live in the United Kingdom, and all of them are very grateful of the opportunity they were given by the host country and would do anything in order to show their appreciation and respect (Weaver & Syal, 2021). In the past few years, however, Albanians started to choose countries who could offer them more opportunities and had a strong growing economy, becoming UK one of them. Some try getting in by asking for asylum others that cannot find a way, go illegally, this exodus of Albanian migrants is not well seen by the host country citizens who have showed their discontent regarding this topic and so did the government (Thomas, 2021). In the past few years' Albanian asylum claimers in the UK have been rising and are holding now the second place. Even though Albania is considered by the UK a safe country, there are still refugees coming, but also economic migrants and organized criminality migrants (Thomas, 2021).

The UK has The New Plan for immigration. The government wants to punish asylum seekers who enter the UK illegally, even if they are refugees. This punishment can be refusal of refugee states, but what can be considered legal or illegal when a refugee enters a country? The New Plan main idea as it seems, is to send asylum seekers to the Ascension Island, and 40% of the United Kingdom population is on board with that, 25% have no opinion and 35% are against (Thomas, 2021). In the Ascension Island they want to separate the refugees in two groups. Most of the UK citizens believe that asylum seekers are in fact in its most not refugees, just people who are trying to migrate to Great Britain and their entry was denied. The British government wants now to take things publicly when talking about immigration, even if it involves foreigners that are offenders in the UK, or have committed crimes in British soil, or even why the refugee's status is not accepted. There is no registration about how many illegal immigrants there are in the UK because since 2005 no one has updated it (Thomas, 2021). The New Plan also has a strategy of sending their refugees to a third country, but actually convincing other countries to accept them is not that easy either. Since it is impossible to reassure that the refugees are sent back to their country or another one, trying to dissuade them to come

and make the UK citizens not wanting them seems an easier solution. The refugees can be divided in Failed asylum seekers and genuine refugees, but a failed asylum seeker can also be a genuine refugee that just failed to convince the immigration court of that, or the judge just did not want to approve them. Not all asylum claims are the same, the countries who are considered safe in the UK already have a higher chance of their claim being seen and approved. Albania is considered a safe country and has now gotten more attention due to the increasing number of asylum claims (Thomas, 2021). Not being part of EU, is something good and at the same time bitter for them, to have access to the UK, not being part of the EU means they can use the refugee claim card. From 2010-2019 the claims went from 174 to 3488. Only 7% of refugee claims in Albania have been accepted in the EU. Before the pandemic covid-19, various citizens from the UK were spending their vacation in Albania, it has been promoted by their country as a great place for tourism. This sudden interesse that the UK has, that their citizens go to Albania is not innocent, it is all part of a plan, once their citizens see how nice and safe Albania is, they will not believe when asked if Albanian refugees should enter England (Thomas, 2021). Albania is known for criminal activities in British soil as some Albanian gangs control most of UK's cocaine traffic and have a strong involvement in organised crime groups. The Shiptare Mafia is known for transforming the cocaine market (Thomas, 2021).

Albanians fleeing to the UK are hiding from blood feuds themselves, some of which have been involved in crimes, but there are also the citizens that make refugee claims due to precariousness economic and social situation of Albania, they use this strategy to reach the UK. In the UK economic migration and refugee status of Albanians are somehow blurred to the lack of conditions they face in both cases. Another strategy used by the Albanians is claiming to be Kosovars when asking the refugee status. When they fail to put foot on United Kingdom legally, they do it the other way around (Thomas, 2021). If the new plan goes toward it will not eliminate refugees and immigrants in the UK, it will only increase the number of migrants that enter by illegal processes. Albanian citizens already have been doing it, when their claims are denied, that is why the crime rates related to them keeps growing, once they have no job or house, they turn to the crime world (Thomas, 2021).

In sum, after Enver Hoxha came to power an extremely difficult period started for the Albanians who saw their rights to move being taken away. If in the first decade, Italy and

Greece were the countries that held more Albanians, due its proximity. After 2010 Albanians started looking for places with better condition since both of those countries had been through major crises and were lacking opportunities. Germany, United Kingdom, Switzerland are nowadays the main destinations. Albania has improved a lot since the communism fall but still has a long way to go, as the country cannot provide the citizens with a dignified life, where housing, food, education is accessible to everyone, making migration the only way for the Albanians to improve their living conditions. Albania has all the resources to grow but is lacking a government that can actually make use of them for the best and re-write its country history for the future generations.

Chapter 2

Portugal as a host country for migration: historical overview and recent trends

Migration has also been crucial to Portugal. This chapter aims to understand the relation between Portugal and migration, thus exploring the context that can allow us to better explain the expectations and experiences of Albanians in this country. In the first section, the chapter will focus on Portuguese history and its relation with migration more broadly. The second section part it will briefly explain the migration of eastern citizens to Portugal. Regarding this topic there is almost no literature that tackles these countries in isolation and thus there is no literature about Albanian migrants in Portugal. In addition to that, we will briefly look at Brazilian migration to Portugal in order to better understand a way to understand how Portugal function as a host country.

2.1. The complex relationship between Portugal and Migration: a brief historical overview

Portugal is often seen as a desirable country to migrants due to its culture, weather, location, and friendliness of its citizens. A lot of migrants that come to Portugal from Brazil, and African countries, due to the language and cultural barrier being smaller, but most of the migrants once they are in Portugal realize things are not as easy as they thought initially.

Portugal was the first nation in Europe to establish commerce with African kingdoms and states. Throughout the years these trades lead to the rise of a kingdom in the other continent, spices, ivory, and, cloth, manufactured goods and slaves were the key to the success, their exportation led to the Portuguese growth (Nogueira, 2019). Portugal was also the only European country to keep their colonies overseas for long, they only let go of Angola, Cape Verde, Timor, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and São Tomé e Príncipe in the mid 70's after the 25th of April (Arenas, 2015).

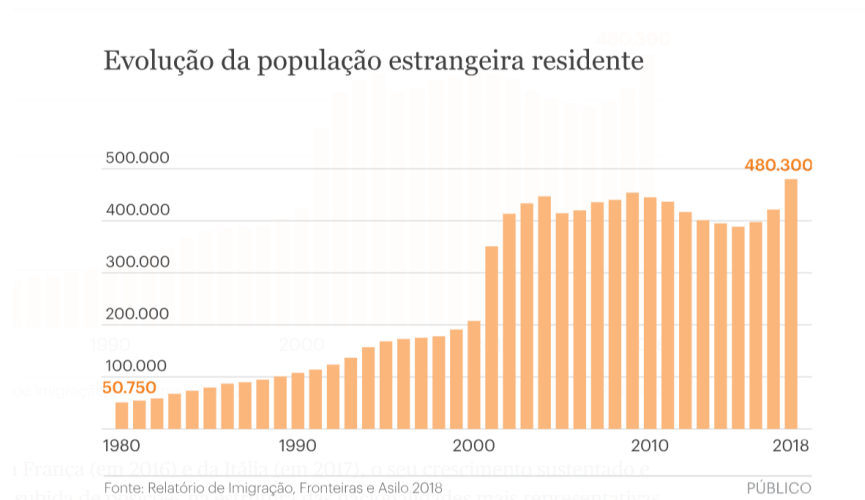
Regarding its own history with migration, this nation has seen various flows on incoming and outgoing migration. Portugal itself does not have a very different past from Albania, D. Henrique was given the kingdom of Portugal by his father-in-law when he married Teresa, once they had their son D. Afonso Henriques, he wanted more to Portugal than just obeying his grandfather. (Nogueira) Afonso Henriques just like Skanderbeg was very resilient and fought his own mother to free Portugal from Spain. The treaty of Zamora was signed in 1143, Portugal became an independent country. Throughout the centuries various kings and dynasties have been running Portugal until the year of 1910 when it was implemented the first republic. Resembling Albania, Portugal had also been in a dictatorship called “Estado Novo” for 41 years, since 1933 until 1974. Antonio de Oliveira Salazar was the prime minister and dictator. Portugal’s dictatorship was not as closed as Albania’s but they did coincide in some points as all of them do (BAR, 2019). Portugal was extremely religious the main idea was god, homeland and family, when in Albania religion was forbidden to unify, here Catholicism was used to bring people together.

During that period, PIDE was the state police that would arrest anyone who would conspire or say something against the president, a lot of people ran away to other countries by foot and illegally in order to escape. On the 25th of April of 1974 the Carnation Revolution took place and Portugal was freed, no blood was shed and no one was injured, the Portuguese military when on the street after hearing the song *Grândola, Vila Morena* by Zeca Afonso, then the people followed and the government surrendered themselves. After the end of the dictatorship Portugal lost all the colonies and the Portuguese living there had to come back to the mainland. At that time Portugal lost a lot of people who finally left the country in a legal way, but also gained more return migrants (Arenas, 2015).

However, in the post-revolution period that coincided with the post colonialism Portugal faced a lot of structural problems that came with the democracy. The end of colonies made a lot of Portuguese return to their homeland, but also boosted the migration of Africans and Brazilians who thought of seeking for a better life in Portugal. This phenomenon has several reasons but the majority has to do with the culture and language being very similar, something that will help when looking for a job and settling in since blending is always hard no matter where (Arenas, 2015). The migratory movements from Portuguese

to other European countries, also happened during the 70s, the instability and the freedom to leave the country after 41 years being imprisoned were the main reasons. Even though in Africa Islam is predominant., in the ex-colonies Catholicism was the main religion just like in Portugal something that created a connection of the migrants with the country. The foreign population in Portugal is increasing every year very rapidly, and nowadays it is not just ex colonies but also people from Canada, Usa, Germany, that are looking for a cheaper country to live with better weather and security. (Cunha, 2019)

2.2. Some trends on Eastern European migration towards Portugal



Migration from the East countries such as Albania, Ukraine, Croatia, Romania, or Slovenia to Portugal has been changing its pattern since the 70s when it became more and more recurring due the Carnations revolution (Baganha, Marques, & Goís, 2004). However, by that time 3 out of 4 migrants came from Europe, by the 1980s the African and Brazilian migrants gained some force into the statistics and their community started to grow. The early 2000's had a wave of migrations from the East nearly 100.000 thousand citizens from eastern countries got their residential permits. The Ukrainian community represented around 50% of those and most of them stayed in Lisbon. The reasons why Eastern migrants were coming to Portugal as their final destination was mainly because it was easier to be legalized when compared to other European countries and most of them found job very easily, mostly in restaurants, house and construction work (Perista, 2004).

Even tough Portugal became democratic in the mid 1970's, the modernization of the country took several years. It became a country with a high demand for cheap labour in the construction area and this opened a door was open for the migrants to get a secure

entry in Portugal. Furthermore, Portugal is part of the Schengen space which makes it easier to travel, there is no need for a visa, or any other documentation other than an ID card or passport. This, however, was also taken advantage by networks of human trafficking. Most of them come with the promise of well-paid work upon arrival. This is a recurring practice in Eastern countries since the criminal organizations take advantage of the population ingenuity and poverty for their own advantage. Once they are in Portugal their passports are taken so that there is no possibility of leaving the country or even get legalised (Perista, 2004). Over the years there has been multiple attempts to stop this schemes and various measures have been taken, but unfortunately there are always new ways that are created and there are always migrants getting stuck in situations like this. Eastern citizen chooses Portugal for various reasons, and their communities have been growing with the passing years, most of them have found here in Portugal a place where they can call home (Perista, 2004)

Still, in the last decades much more was written on the specificities faced by the Eastern European communities living in Portugal. As some pointed, the early two thousand were characterized by unexpected arrival of a growing number of migrants from this region, therefore making a substantive change in the previous patterns of migration towards Portugal (Marques & Góis, 2016). A key difference in this regard is that, in contrast to other groups that composed the most visible immigrant communities in Portugal, such as those from Angola, Brazil or Cape Verde, Eastern European citizens had no prior ties with Portugal economically, culturally or either historical. These migrant waves were strongly influenced by other factors. Apart from the social, economic and political turmoil that characterized the region in the aftermath of the Cold War and the following decades, this shift strongly motivated by the work carried out by organized migration assistance networks and other companies, with strong financial motives, that recruited Eastern European migrants by selling the image of Portugal as a country with easy legalisation and stressing the country's need of workers in labour-intensive sectors such as tourism, construction, or domestic labour. As widely documented, it was this combination between widespread insecurity at home and the promise of work upon arrival that pushed Eastern European migrants to take the risk and embark in this journey to a country to which they had no cultural or linguistic ties (Marques & Góis, 2016). Equally important, albeit intense this cross-border movement was ubiquitously linked to the economic expectations

of Eastern European migrants and, as such, when the recession started to be felt in Portugal in 2004 the number of migrants from this region gradually dropped (Marques & Góis, 2016).

As the same study points, upon arrival Eastern European migrants often faced work related discrimination on a systematic basis and where forced to take precarious jobs that rarely ensured access to social security or a decent pay. Apart from rendering them vulnerable to their employees, this sort of experience was prolonged in time and lasted up to five years. Afraid of even leaving Portugal to visit relatives in their home country, the fear of deportation or simply losing the job upon return, made them wait years in the country to ensure that they would have the right to be granted permanent asylum. Based on numerous interviews, the authors even pointed that they were freed it seemed like they were living in an entirely different world (Marques & Góis, 2016). When it comes to perceiving themselves as part of the Portuguese society, the main obstacle pointed by these communities was language. Naturally, this created numerous obstacles to their full integration including but not limited to access to information, rights, education and even access to the job market. The lack of linguistic knowledge, they pointed, often led to or facilitated professional stagnation. To put simply, it prevented them from to find better paying jobs, know other job opportunities and, equally important, develop strong ties with the Portuguese community (Marques & Góis, 2016).

Some of the work on this subject stressed exactly this point: the integration challenges that were faced by Eastern European migrant communities in Portugal as a result of the lack of social and linguistic ties. As noted in a previous study, despite some major cultural differences and the challenges of belonging, in addition to precarious working conditions, they often felt welcomed in the Portuguese society (Castro & Delgado Marques, 2008). Blatant forms of prejudice and discrimination were rarely mentioned and, regardless of the major professional constraints widely experienced, most of these groups shared a positive outlook about the country and its people. As for their experiences when it comes to settling in the country and navigating the Portuguese society, they often shared some common traits. For instance, their first residence in Portugal was often described as precarious and, in some cases, even lacking basic living conditions. Given the financial constraints that shaped their livelihoods, during the early stages after arrival they often shared the same house with other families. Without documentation it becomes extremely

difficult to find a steady job; without knowing the language, it was even more difficult to access adequate housing conditions. Regardless, in this setting migrant community networks ended up playing a key role when it comes to making the integration process smoother, not only by allowing access to information and housing, but also to better understand the requirements necessary to achieve the resident permit (Castro & Delgado Marques, 2008).

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Chapter 3

Theory and method: human security and semi-structured interviews

Having clarified the major trends in Albanian migration and migration towards Portugal, this chapter seeks to introduce the theory and methodology utilized for the empirical analysis of the life trajectories and expectations of Albanian migrants in Portugal. The first section will focus on the notion of human security and explain its evolving meaning and use. After that, the argument will explore the link between migration and human security and briefly discuss the case of Albania. In doing so, it further clarifies the conditions experienced by those living in the country and which often force them to leave. Following from that, the chapter will introduce the method of semi-structured interviews, presenting some details on this method and clarifying both the sample and questions asked.

3.1. Theoretical framework: introducing human security

The idea of human security was first put forward in the Human Development Report published by the United Nations in 1994 (UNDP, 1994). This concept departs from other previous concepts of security, such as national, regional or international security. In fact, if during the Cold War security was exclusively associated to the protection of the state and preserving the balance between the two great powers, since then it became increasingly associate with the development and well-being of groups and individuals. This is both natural and necessary since the world is getting more globalised day by day and the problems that affect one country will soon after the others (Liotta & Owen, 2006, pp. 37-54). In shifting the focus from states to individuals, this notion stressed the importance of focusing on issues such as poverty, hunger or education. In that sense, this concept was revolutionary. Security became understood through a human lenses connected to different issues such as food, health, or education (Shepherd, 2013, pp. 202-205).

This concept has been adopted by various countries. The first states to give more importance to human security were some of the most developed countries Canada, Japan and Norway. The concept as expected is not flawless but it is something that with the years has been improved, one of the questions that was put in as a problem, is when a country is in conflict which are the main insecurities that need to be put first? Is it the nation's safety or people poverty and hunger? (Shepherd, 2013, pp. 202-205). All policies have supporters and critiques, but one thing is certain, the idea of human security has brought a new perspective to global governance. The conventional idea that people would be secure if the country was heavily harmed and ready for war have changed and now people's own daily needs are put first, it was finally understood that for people to feel safe there is a need to feel secure and fulfilled in their own country and not living every day in fear that they will not have where to sleep, what to eat or access to primary health care (Shepherd, 2013, pp. 37-54).

Globalisation has brought unlimited benefits to the citizens, but with that also came along a lot of new problems. The increasing needs of the population need to be looked after by the government, so in the present day, human security is more about preserve and defend the populations demands, socially, personally, economically and politically never forgetting that the country's laws and international treaties need to be respected in order to do not have a security breach that will leave the nation unprotected and helpless (Farruku, 2016).

Even though there are many problems that involve both population and country security is one of the most important since the citizens quality of life and satisfaction depends in its majority of it. Throughout the years state security has been changing with the modernization of the world and globalisation. If before it meant protecting their territory, having an autonomous economy, or even avoiding possible conflict to emerge within its borders, if the nation was protected the habitants would also be, this notion as commuted since it was acknowledged that having a prodigious army, well secured borders and diplomatic relations was not enough for the citizens to feel safe in their own country, the feel of protection went beyond of that (Farruku, 2016).

What would take for the individuals to feel safe and trust their governments? Once things started to change, the country's territory was not a priority anymore, but the people necessities were, so the individual's security became the states security, it was their solo responsibility to protect their people. However, for the citizens to feel sheltered they need to have a dignified life with stable income, a house, protection from criminality, groceries, clothing if all of these main conditions are present in their lives, they will have a very predictable life that brings psychological and physical security that ends the cycle in harmony (Liotta & Owen, 2006, pp. 37-54). This is the aim of human security: to ensure that everyone around the world is able to live in such a peaceful environment with all the conditions to have a prosperous life.

Unfortunately, that could not be furthest from the reality (SDG4-Education 2030, 2015). Non-governmental organizations and governments have been working together for many years to achieve the main goal of ending world insecurity, the 2030 agenda for sustainable development has 17 main targets: No poverty, zero hunger, good health and wellbeing , quality education, gender equality , clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, decent work and economic growth, industry innovation and infrastructures, sustainable cities and communities , responsible consumption and production, climate action, life below water and on land, peace justice and strong institutions and partnerships for the goals. The purpose of these 17 milestones is to bring security to every single person in the planet by the end of the decade (SDG4-Education 2030, 2015). Regrettably even the more developed countries are facing problems of these kind with their own habitants with the inflation, the house, energy and food prices escalated in a way that poverty is growing very rapidly, this does not only affect the north of the globe but will bring even more cataphoric results to the underdeveloped countries that rely on the rich nation to survive (SDG4-Education 2030). Once the population starts to become discontent with the lack of living conditions they turn into their government for response and help, which can lead to a breach in human security, since they failed to protect their citizen.

3.2. The link between human security and migration

In 1648 the Thirty Years war ended, which was one of the longest and most destructive conflicts in Europe. By the end the treaties of Osnabrück and Münster were signed, paving the way for the Westphalia Peace. These treaties brought a new form of authority into the state's sovereignty, whereas other countries could not interfere with the domestic affair and security of another. This also meant that the states could interfere with who could enter or not the country, with this migration could be controlled. The main ideas of Westphalia Peace are still applied to the modern society and country's security. (Vietti & Scribner, 2013)

Migration is as old as human beings. However, it was only after the Westphalia peace that transborder movements started to be widely controlled by the state (Truong, 2011). Borders define territories, and controlling who can enter or not is a central element of sovereignty. Illegal migration is often seen as an attack to a country's sovereignty. Even though border control is the key in these situations, the human security approach would differ, instead of not letting the underprivileged not enter, why not understand the factors behind these migration waves, the lack of economic opportunities, political instability (Vietti & Scribner, 2013).

There are two types of migration: forced migration, when the people are running from a war, conflict, human rights violation, and there is the voluntary migration where they leave their country freely because that is what they want, even though we called it voluntary because they choose to do so, it can be seen as involuntary because if their country would have the economic conditions for them to live a decent life, they would not have to leave (Vietti & Scribner, 2013).

From a human security perspective, in order for involuntary migration to be over, there would be the need for the international community to engage and make efforts together, to end what is making people migrate out of fear and lack of stability, if this happens migration would be for those who wanted to do it out of choice not necessity (Vietti & Scribner, 2013). However, human security is still far from being achieved in most countries. The lack of human rights, peace, active conflicts, lack of democratic institution are some of the underlying reasons for the intensification of international migration. These are all social and political conditions that dictate the will of a citizen to migrate. If

a citizen feels that his life might be in jeopardy due to the lack of human security, he will choose to leave behind his country to find what is missing there. The international community can act to prevent these situations, the interception of a conflict in its beginning is more effective and less costly in the end. After discussing the lack of human security that leads to migration, now it will be looked at the journey the migrants do until their final destination through the prism of human security. (Vietti & Scribner, 2013)

Migrants themselves are in very difficult and vulnerable situations, through the human security spectrum it is crucial to protect them. Unfortunately, sexual exploitation and human trafficking are very common in irregular migrant's camps, especially for women and children. Human security tries to find ways to prevent this event and make migrants feel safe while crossing their path. (Truong, 2011)

Therefore, with the global world we are facing nowadays it is very hard to rely on national security without creating conditions for the people to feel safe in their own state. (Vietti & Scribner, 2013). A human security perspective on migration allows the international community to identify the threats to the citizens and prevent them from escalating. The Global Commission on International Migrations has been very vocal about how the human security threats are related to migration, and instead of just closing their doors to migrants, maybe other strategies could be implemented, such as creating a safe environment in their homeland, a stable economy and life, if the governments are able to provide these changes, the inhabitants' security will not be jeopardized and migration will be more a choice than an obligation. (Vietti & Scribner, 2013)

Human security and migration are interconnected more than it might seem, as people are often deprived of security in their daily life by governments that do not do anything to provide stability to them, the role of human security is to try to create a safer environment for those who are still lacking it (Vietti & Scribner, 2013).

3.3. Albania and the lack of (human) security

In 1997 a pyramid scheme that collapsed left a lot of Albanians in bankruptcy, and in 1998 a few years after the communist regime went down and democracy started to rise that is when the concept of human security gained relevance because the security concept in Albania was being restructured. With the help of NGOs and some foreign actors Albania was able to build on a programme to face the security challenges the country was

facing (Farruku, 2016). The new security strategy consisted in working towards a safer country and environment for the citizens. Even though throughout the years things have evolved security is still very traditional more state centred rather than human centred. In 1998 the Albanian constitution implemented fundamental rights but there is still a lot to improve, but in order to develop national/human security there are a few points who firstly need to be put in place, like security for who? And how much security is needed? Human security in Albania has always been jeopardized due to the country's political, social, economic instability (Farruku, 2016).

However, human security main obstacle in Albania is poverty and unemployment even though it is lowering the rate is still very high, because it is a society of contrasts. From one side there are the low class who is fighting to not be below the poverty line, to have more than the minimum wage and be able to live a dignified life, in the other side there are the middle/upper classes who are trying to grow their wealth even more so are fighting for different things. However, Albanians do what they need to provide for their families this meaning that they would take employment that was not legal specially in factories, underpaid and also without an insurance it was discovered in 2008 after an explosion in a factory that even children were working. The citizens are being exploited in their own country something's that impacts directly human security, because in order for this to be happening it means that the governments it is failing their own people. (Farruku, 2016)

Food security is when everyone in the country has access to sufficient food in order to have a healthy life and not be undernourished. Before the end of the communism, a lot of people lived off the products they would cultivate for themselves and also to sell, agriculture was one of the main livelihoods, especially because most of the population lived on the rural side, after the fall of the dictatorship the rural areas were abandoned because Albanians were looking for better way of lives and most of them migrated, as a consequence Albania needed to import most of their goods since there was no population to keep the agriculture going. Since imported goods are more expensive the food prices also raised this caused the low-income families to not have enough to have a healthy diet in some parts of the country this caused a higher mortality. (Farruku, 2016)

Economic security in Albania is one of the main issues, since the end of the dictatorship their economic situation has not been stable, with a lot of crises throughout the years, and lack of governmental support. The government is responsible for their population to

insure they have education. Health, job, housing, but it is not the case. The precarious conditions the population lives make it impossible to have financial security, in order for that to happen the population would have to be able to have a minimum wage to live, even though the economy has grown there is still a huge percentage of poverty, and until the government does something regarding the underpaid, illegal and precarious jobs, the system will remain the same. The health system of Albania with the help of NGO's has grown and even though it still needs some changes it has reached the population, the accommodations and services need improvements but overall has contributed for a general better health within the society, and the mortality rate drop (Farruku, 2016).

However, Albania still has a long path to go when it comes to establish human security. Human security is the ideal form of security for every country, people are the centre of a nation, without them the country has no way of growth. The government prime concern must be the comfort of their citizens, appropriate housing conditions, food, health care system that is reliable, employment, and liveable wages, education for everyone and respect of everyone not distinguishing people from different social classes. When these matters are taken in consideration the society is happy, comfortable and confident in their leader, this leads to country's having no state problems or threatens to their people security since people feel secure and trust their own future and their countries future. When one of the reasons listed above is failing the citizens trust in the government also declines creating a general disbelief and discontent regarding their own country, when this happens and no changes is to be seen people leave their own country to find what they do not have in other place, the home country loses active population and starts lacking growth.

3.4. Research method: semi-structured interviews

Having explained my theoretical framework to explore the motivations, experiences and expectations of Albanian migrants in Portugal, I will now explain the method selected to collect and analyse information: semi-structured interviews. Interviews are one of the most common method utilized in qualitative research. After the interview the information has to be gathered and then the transcription made it is easier to get more information about certain topics and even explore the interviewees personal experiences that enrich that final work. In my thesis I opted to use qualitative semi- structured interviews so that

I can have some questions prepared but also give the participants the freedom to explore what is been asked and share their own experience (Bryman, 2016).

Qualitative interviews are less structured and made to capture the participants point of view, due to that the answer can drift a little from the original question since when answering people start to bring some other topics, the interview in that way can control the interview and adjust the question and go with the flow, because most of the times they bring up very interesting facts that were not firstly put on the script (Bryman, 2016). Even though there are many types of interviews, semi- structured interviews are the best option to address my research question. Since are only partially structured, they allow interviewees the opportunity to tell their story from their own vantage point.

Thus, when talking about migration the migrant's perspective is the most important part, how their journey was, how they view it and their concerns. These types of interviews require asking participants a few questions to be addressed. Those points maybe be answered in a different order and some new question can be added by the interview after a reply. It is a flexible process, where the interviewer takes the lead and can navigate through the responses given, in this way it allows the exercise to go smoothly and the participant to feel relaxed, comfortable and not pressured. However, the preparation of the interview needs to be done beforehand in order to respect the guidelines.

The first step is to make a script with the most important questions because they will be there to guide the interviewer and not get lost within the interview, since there is room for the participants to speak freely, the interview can change directions and lose the important information in the middle. Before starting to write the question, the interview must think "What information do I need from this interview in order to answer my research questions?", then the questions must be revised and put in some order so that the conversation flows and no the interview does not seem confuse and not well prepared. It is crucial that the language used is adapted to the participants to avoid misunderstandings and make them not question everything that is asked, something that can stop the interview (Bryman, 2016). Lastly the interviewer cannot go with closed question and not be willing to explore more the content the interviewee is giving. Question can come up due to the direction the interview is taking and they may be even more valuable than the ones that were in the script. In the end the interviewer must take notes of how the interview went, where it was, what they thought, if the person was nervous. Nevertheless,

my interviews will be semi structured, my audience are Albanian that migrated to Portugal. (Bryman, 2016)

3.4.1. Interview questions and sample

In this thesis the data was collected through semi-structured interviews. The four participants were asked to answer in detail nine question related regarding their journey towards Portugal, underlying motivations, experiences as a migrant and expectations for the future. This study is case directed, meaning that not only statements were collected but also was tried to connect several interrelations. The interview was built upon the following questions:

- 1- Which were the main motivations that made you leave Albania?
- 2- Which were the reasons to choose Portugal as a host country?
- 3- Did you ever experience any kind of stigma whilst in Portugal?
- 4- How was the integration and adaptation to the country?
- 5- Was ever any moment where you felt not welcomed into the Portuguese society, or was there a moment where you felt that you already belonged here?
- 6- Based on your lived experiences and trajectory, how do you think that the Albanian community is seen abroad and if you think that in Portugal that is different?
- 7- Before coming to Portugal did you have any expectations regarding your future in the country, and were them fulfilled ?
- 8- Does Portugal offer conditions to migrants, for them to have documents, housing?

Given the exploratory nature of this project and the fact that the community is relatively small, the research sample consists in four interviews. The transcript of the interviews in Annex I will be available to those responsible for evaluating this dissertation and, as previously mentioned to the participants in this study, will be destroyed once the evaluation process is complete. The participants had different living conditions in Albania and reasons that made them leave the country. All the participants have higher education degrees obtained in both in Portugal and other European country and work in the field they have studied. They have been in Portugal for at least five years, but most of them have been here for more than two decades. The participants are three males and three

females, with ages between 25 and 51 years old. The research was conducted in Lisbon and Porto where most Albanians migrants are located, and was carried out online via video call. For privacy reasons, all the names have been changed.

Chapter 4

Analysis and Discussion: Albanian migrants living in Portugal

4.1. Analysis of interviews: life trajectories, adaption and belongingness

In the last few decades there has been a constant and growing number of Albanians leaving the country, with most of them travelling to the UK, Greece and Italy. However, and as previously mentioned, Portugal is a place with a small Albanian community. So, to begin with, I would like to understand first, what specific factors pushed you to leave Albania in the first place - was that related mostly with a sense of physical insecurity in the country, or was it motivated for political reasons or was it mostly related with financial reasons and expectations of having a more comfortable life abroad? Second, why Portugal and not one of the other countries where there are bigger communities from Albania that could potentially facilitate your integration in the host country?

Examining the four cases, I will seek to shed light on their life trajectories and focus on questions of adaption and belongingness. All these participants have in common their living conditions, and upbringing: coming from a totally different country and having to start from the zero, learning a new language, re-do their studies, and start a new life in Portugal. The interviewees have faced some difficulties, but all of them were employed in high earning jobs since the beginning of their journey to the country, making it easier for them to fit in the society, did not need any social benefits and always had access to employment, housing, and education. They were never marginalized and always felt that they belong to the Portuguese society. The selection in the differences of these cases studies also allows us to see if those that migrated twenty years ago had a smoother process than those that move into Portugal more recently.

4.1.1 *Elgin*

Elgin, aged fifty-one, studied medicine in Tirana and migrated to Lisbon in 2001. The communist regime had fallen in the early nineties and the situation in Albania was chaotic. More than 20% of the population left and conflicts started to emerge in the country. For him, the main reasons that pushed him to leave Albania was the widespread corruption

and wanting to give his toddler a better future. Apart from political insecurity, health insecurity also played an important role in the decision. His son was sick and healthcare services in Albania lacked resources. From his perspective, medicine was not advanced enough, which created a risk for his kid. In Portugal things would certainly be different. Apart from that, Albania did not offer the best prospects for the future. In his words:

“The corruption levels, I do not identify myself with that. I also thought about giving my son a better future. I wanted him to grow in a developed country where he could have more opportunities.”

Elgin also chose Portugal because his sister was already there. The existence of family networks might not be the main push out of the country, but they certainly help migrants to pull into a specific country. This was his case. When he and his son Butrint came to Portugal for a first visit to see a doctor, he saw on the news that there was a high demand for doctors in the country. He quickly thought that maybe Portugal could be an option as he could continue his medical career whilst not having to face the same levels of financial, social and political insecurity.

“Me and Butrint came here in 2000, I was watching the news and saw that there was an interest from Portugal’s side, and I could “easily” continue my career path as a doctor here in Portugal.”

Once he and his family had already moved to Portugal, Elgin says that the adaptation was not that hard. For him, language was the main barrier of a swift integration but even that was resolved easily. Then, the most challenging part became bureaucracy. At that time, there was no Albanian embassy in Portugal. Every single document had to be sent to Paris and this took a long time. Meanwhile, he perfected the language by talking to his fellow doctors and patients on the daily basis.

Regarding the stigmas Elgin says he never really felt it. From his perspective, he was always very well treated by everyone not only in the work environment but also outside it. He was respected. In his perspective the Portuguese are very nice and welcoming people. He worked in Lisbon before moving to Porto to work and, on this topic, he cannot stop but noticing that northern people tend to be nicer.

“I have never felt it, never felt it, never felt any kind of stigma was always very welcomed, and always had good relationships with my colleagues and other people be it in my personal life or my professional life in the medical field.”

Nevertheless, he says that the Albanians are a small community in Portugal and are well blend into the society. At least this is the case for all the Albanian’s that he got to know since he arrived. For him this has a lot to do with the Portuguese not knowing the Albanians history, location. Curiously, he also links this to the fact that their culture and physical appearance is quite similar to the Portuguese one.

Elgin’s expectations when he came here were met. Still, he was disappointed to find that Portugal also has a high level of corruption, something that he made him leave Albania. He says, nonetheless, that it is not on the same but still happens a lot, and Portugal has all the tools to be a great country and one the best countries in Europe.

“On what I thought, the only thing that disappointed me was the high level of corruption, one of the factors I did not like in my country”

Whilst being quite happy with his integration in Portugal, Elgin believes that Portugal is not necessarily an easy country for a migrant. This is particularly true if the migrant has to start from zero and has not completed higher education. From his perspective, job opportunities for unskilled workers often result in the exploitation of migrants. For him it was not that hard only because he had a good stable job and was quick to learn the language. Still, he notes, for someone who comes with nothing it can be very hard:

“I speak about my own experience, in my job, including engineer, nurses, people who had some degree, it was easier to build a life here comparing it to other migrants that come from other countries to do unskilled jobs, for them it is very hard and are easily exploited.”.

4.4.2. Uarda

Being 51 years old, Uarda studied medicine in Tirana and migrated to Lisbon in 2001. She moved because her son Butrint was sick and him and his father had already been in Portugal before, and they knew that in Albania there were not available more resources to treat him. Adding to that, his aunt was married to a Portuguese man and this made it easier to. For her, at that time Albania was very unstable at social, political and economic

levels. Still, and despite the physical and financial insecurity that resulted from that, health insecurity seems to be the main reason to move.

“There was a lack of doctors, his sister was here so we had some support. The conditions in Albania were very very very bad. There was a lot of insecurity. a civil war was going on, therefore an emotional, physical and economic instability, this made us think about migrating.”

However, and in contrast with the previous case, the adaptation to Portugal was extremely hard for Uarda. In the beginning she mostly stayed home, while her son’s father went straight to work. She did not know a single word in Portuguese and her son also went to day care so she ended up alone most of the days and without speaking or learning the language. This started to change with time. For her, Butrint helped her a lot with language. When he would come home from kindergarten he would speak in Portuguese and explain all the things he learned while he was out.

“Butrint was very little, and I was trying to learn the language using a book, trough Butrint I got used to connect what I was reading in the book with what he was saying. The biggest barrier was the language and then getting used to it”

Concerning the stigma, Uarda says she never felt any form of discrimination or judgement. In Portugal everyone was very polite to her, even during the period in which she was pursuing her medical specialization at the hospital. She said that, In Portugal everyone was very welcoming. Perhaps because no one really knows a lot about Albania and Albanians, whereas in Italy and Greece they have a large community and are often seen in a negative light.

Uarda feels part of the Portuguese community. She feels that she achieved all of the goals she set before moving to Portugal. She is professionally fulfilled as a doctor and has raised her son Butrint who is very respectful young adult and works at an embassy.

“I already achieved my goals, I already feel fulfilled regarding my job and also my son, I feel very fulfilled I raised an amazing son”

She does not know a lot of Albanians and Portugal. Still, and based on the few ones that she got to know during this period, she thinks that they are all well blended into the

Portuguese society. Since the community here is small, they go very unnoticed and blend right into it.

Nevertheless, before moving Uarda actually had little expectations regarding Portugal. She did not know much about the country and had not been to a lot of countries due to the dictatorship, but she knew it was a developed country and once she arrived became in love with country.

“It was in 2001, it was the third country I had been, outside Albania, the first was Macedonia, it was forbidden to travel before 1990. The second was Turkey when we went on vacations and the third Portugal. I did not know much. I did not come with much knowledge, but it was love at first sight”

To her, coming to Portugal as a migrant was not that difficult as she had financial support from the Gulbenkian Foundation because she was working/studying medicine. Every month she would receive 500 euros and 20 years ago, she notes, that was a lot of money. Furthermore, it was still easy to find a house. Still, the documents were the hardest part. Again, the lack of an embassy was the issue. For her, for someone who wants to move here and has no support, specially nowadays, it is very hard. With inflation prices have skyrocketed:

“Regarding documents it is hard. But housing migrants is even more difficult. We had financial help from the Gulbenkian foundation, I forgot to tell that, we had help due to the school, which helped, I do not know about the others if they do that, so it was a foundation who helped us financially, it was 500 hundred euros, but 500 euros 20 years ago was already very good.”

4.4.3. Erla

Erla, aged forty-seven has a PhD in Philosophy that was done while in Portugal. She now owns a business where she works in the administration. In her case, she left Albania because she met her husband in Tirana, and decided to stop her studies to come to Portugal with him, and has been here for twenty-five years. Migrating was not something that she had thought before. She came to Portugal only because of her husband, who was Portuguese.

“I met Bernardo back then, in Tirana, after that I decided to come here (Portugal), I stopped my studies and decided to continue my life in Portugal, 25 years ago”

Erla says that she was always very well welcomed but she felt some stigma occasionally. When she came to Portugal, she was the first Albanian student at Nova University. As she recalls, there was a lot of curiosity in meeting someone from another country and thus she felt very welcomed. People asked her about her the country, but as time passed she started to have some less pleasant encounters, where she felt some kind of racism against her because of where she came from. As she told me:

“There were times where I felt some manifestation, a less friendly opinion, and it always came from people with lack of knowledge, who travelled very little, do not know the outside. So yes, there were some situations where I felt some sort of racism, prejudice”

Erla describes her integration in Portugal as rather smooth. It was not very difficult. This, she thinks, was also due to her profile. She had finished her studies and started working in other projects. She never had to search for job as she always worked on her own company. Still, she says that when presenting a project, and if there was someone with a similar project and profile as her but Portuguese, she was not the first chosen. The Portuguese would always be chose first. She remembers a very particular moment where she felt a prejudice against her:

“In 2007, I was coordinating a very import project with city halls, companies etc, and I remember a technician who was responsible for project management. (...) She came up to me and said: Erla where are you from? And I said: I am from Albania. Then she says: very interesting, it is not normal to see Albanians working, in jobs like this, they normally do less well-paid jobs. I then told her: Maybe you do not have the right information about that or have you done any study on this?”

In her own point of view Albanians in Portugal are not a well know community since they are very small group and most of them use Portugal only as a transit country. They come here but they want to move into other places. Some of them are caught here with fake passports. Her husband Bernardo is Albanian consul in Portugal and nowadays they are getting more and more calls from tourists asking information about Albania.

“In fact, the Albanians are mostly known unfortunately, there is a part in Portugal, and (Portugal) is used as a transit country, most of them want to go to another country, United states, England, Canada, and they have a difficulty getting a visa. They come to Portugal and are caught with fake passports with fake visas from another European Union countries.”

Erla also says she feels very fulfilled and her expectations regarding Portugal and her life here have been met. She did not have many, but she feels very lucky to have achieved her goals personally and professionally. She did not have any expectations, as noted, but her life is what she always wanted it to be.

For her life as a migrants starting from nothing is never easy. But since the time she came things have become slightly easier at least when it comes to taking care of official documents. Now, she told me, there is no need to have a visa to come here and there are institutions in Portugal to help with the documents, something that did not happen before. However, she also thinks that it might be very difficult for someone wanting to move to Portugal because of the economic instability faced by the country. As she notes, if it is difficult for the Portuguese, it must be even harder for migrants that have very little. Still, for her the Portuguese have an important characteristic: they are very nice and welcoming something that does not happen a lot in other countries.

“Not to say here the procedures are easier or more difficult comparing to other countries, but the Portuguese society has a characteristic, that makes Portugal one of the least racist countries”

4.4.4. Eduard

With 29 years old, Eduard studied International Relations in Italy. He decided to move into Portugal in 2017 and is now the owner of two Italian restaurants in Lisbon. He left Albania because he did not see a future for him there. For him, the decision did not have to only with the economic situation faced by the country but also with the stagnation he himself felt.

To Eduard choosing Portugal was the product of very interesting and funny situation. He was finishing his studies and needed to do Erasmus in other country, but he had no idea about Portugal its history or beauty until he arrived. He fell in love with country instantly. Hence, once concluded the studies he moved right away to Portugal.

“Portugal was an accidental story, in the sense that I had to choose a place to do Erasmus, when I was in Italy studying, and I choose Portugal, without much information about it, but I choose Portugal and I came here in Erasmus, and I loved this country, so I decided to come back to live here.”

He says he never felt like an outsider, after three weeks living in Portugal it already felt like home. Moreover, he also never felt any kind of racism, stigma and was always very welcomed.

For Eduard the integration in the country was very easy. However, he argues that it might not be like that for everyone. He always tried very hard to learn the language and since he already knew Italian, it was a little easier for him. He says the key to fit in a place is to try to learn their language costumes and try to belong in the country. For him, maybe this was because he had this mentality that we never felt like an outsider always felt like he belonged in the country.

“The language was not that hard for me since I spoke Italian, Italian helped me a lot with the Portuguese, but I need to say that I had a lot of will to learn and fit in. For instance, most of my colleagues that came to do Erasmus, only 2/3 made it, learned Portuguese, like me you know. You need a lot of will, that’s why for me it was not that hard, but I have to admit that is not an easy language.”

Eduard says he always felt very welcomed here in Portugal, and he remembered a particular situation that made him very happy and made him feel like he was already Portuguese. As he recalls:

“I had a bakery near home and I left university at 1pm. So, at half past one I was there, to buy bread for lunch. At that time most people had already bought the bread and there was not much left to buy, it was like little balls of bread, that I used to buy, which costed maybe 8 or 9 cents. In the beginning I would buy 3 or 4 and I would pay for each, but after 2 months, there was always the same lady serving me, after two months I would leave the Money, I had in my pocket without counting, it could be less it could be more, but most of the time it was less, and she would just fill the bag with bread without even counting them or the money. This gesture really made me feel like I was home”

From his point of view, Albanians are not well known in Portugal, and when people find out he is Albanian the response is very positive. They are quite curious about it. They always want to know more about the country. This is not always the case. Having studied abroad, in can easily contrast is stay in Portugal with previous experiences. In countries like Greece and Italy, he points, people tend to dislike Albanians and hold prejudice against them. Albanians are, in most cases, not seen well in the community.

“People have curiosity, we do not have any kind of fame good or bad, like we have in other countries like Italy. Here we have always been welcomed with curiosity, that also what I have heard about the others”

Eduard says that since he had already been in Portugal, he knew what he was counting on. He did not have that many expectations, but he knew this was a country with a lot of opportunities to offer. He felt he could invest here and he accomplished what he wanted. Now he owns two restaurants.

“(Portugal) is one of the best countries in Europe to invest, and you know that I already have two restaurants, therefore Portugal met my expectations.”

Still, regarding opportunities for migrants, Eduard think Portugal is one of the easiest countries in European Union to enter and stay legally, to find a job to find a house. As long as the immigrants are well behaved, he thinks, the process is quite easy. He knows how things work in France and Italy and it is quite complex and bureaucratic. Overall, from his point of view, it is very easy for a migrant to make it in Portugal. The country has a lot of opportunities to offer:

“It is easy, you only need five years of legal residence here, after that you only need five years with that residence and then ask of citizenship it takes around 7/8 years, well in my case it was different, I had bad luck with the pandemic, when I asked for my first residence permit, it was during covid, so the process took more time, but basically it is not much time, unlike Italy.”

4.2. Discussion: experiences, motivations and expectations

Finally, I would like to address the main topics, (1) What were the benefits of using qualitative interviews in my research? (2) what conclusions can be taken from the data retrieved and how can be them linked to human security?

Firstly, answering topic number one, the use of qualitative interviews allowed me to have a more personal look into the participants lives, stories and journey, this goes beyond what I could have achieved If I had done only quantitative interview where would be no space for them to speak and bring new topics to the conversation and their personal stories. The interviews were done in the comfort of their house, online, which bring a sense of comfort and security. This made the participants much more comfortable. Trust is important and this approach allow them space to be comfortable when sharing personal stories, personal aspects of their journey, and being themselves. This leads to the second question regarding human security and migration.

4.2.1. Motivations and Human insecurity

Regarding why did the participants leave Albania, all of them had similar motivations and human insecurity is the common link. Elgin and Uarda left the country in 2001 fearing the recurrent civil strifes, pushed by the lack of health security and personal safety, and by unstable and unequal economy. Both wanted a better future for their family and better living conditions for their son. On the other hand, Eduard came to Portugal in 2015. Even though there is a gap of 14 years, the motivations were mainly the same. He saw no prospects of a future in his country and the economic situation was still declining. Therefore, it can be seen that within more than a decade Albania's had not developed, and that the feeling of human insecurity was still the main factor for leaving the country and moving to Portugal. Erla was the only one that did not leave Albania because of social or economic reasons and never had the thought of migration. She moved for personal reasons.

As it was previously mentioned, a majority of migrants choose a country where they already know someone who is settled, so that they have some support upon arrival. Uarda and Elgin choose Portugal to migrate because Elgin's sister was married to a Portuguese man and was already leaving in the country for some years. Erla had the same motives; her boyfriend was Portuguese so she decided to join him. Only Eduard came to Portugal

without knowing anyone or even knowing the country. He was here due to an Erasmus programme and in the end, he choose to stay.

4.2.2. Integration and life in the Portuguese community

All for participants responded positively when asked about how their integration in the Portuguese community was. The general response was that the Portuguese are very polite and welcoming people, and since the culture is very similar it was not hard to adapt. The major difficulty they faced was learning the language since it is very different from Albanian. Eduard already knew Italian so for him it was a different situation, but all of them were able to learn and talk within a year in the country.

Even though the general opinion of the participants was that they never felt any kind of discrimination, Erla recalled some instance where she felt left out or looked aside because of her nationality. But even she admitted that this was quite rare. Overall, she felt that everyone was nice, welcoming and very curious about her and Albania. More broadly, the interviewees say that the Portuguese community felt very curious about them and the country since Albania is not well known in Portugal. The four participants said Portugal was different from other countries such as Greece and Italy. It has something that they do not have and that people are very nice and make everyone feel welcomed.

4.2.3. Expectations and struggles

None of the participants had expectations regarding their journey here, but all of them had goals that wanted to achieve. They came to Portugal looking for better conditions and a place to start a life and have a future, all of them say that they felt happy and fulfilled with what they have achieved and are quite satisfied with what their journey has brought them.

However, all the participants agree that Portugal is an amazing place for migrants to come, but most of the participants agreed that it is difficult to start a life here. The participants who migrated to Portugal earlier have answered that starting a life in Portugal is not easy, all had concerns due to the documentation being very slow, and that at the time there were no embassies in Portugal that could help. Apart from that, they said that housing and work can be very hard sometimes due to the prices and income. On the other hand, Eduard that came in 2015 says that it was a very easy journey, and in their view, the documentation is not that hard to take care off. The same in relation to finding a job

opportunity or a place to stay. This, albeit based on a small sample, suggests that the legal processes have become faster and easier for migrants to come to Portugal. Something that all four have agreed was that Portugal is a great place for migrants when it comes to feel integrated into the society.

Overall, Portugal is seen by these participants as a safe place, where they can find what their country was missing specially regarding insecurity. They always feel safe in Portugal. They are respected and people are welcoming. As most participants have said in Portugal, they found a place that accepted them, unlike Italy or Greece where they faced constant discrimination for their citizenship. Also, citizenship is much harder to get in those countries. Even though the Portuguese economy is not as stable as in other countries, it is safe and stable enough for them. It can be seen from the data retrieved during the interviews that the Albanians in Portugal did not have many issues adjusting to the country or even learning the language. Perhaps that also helped them to feel welcomed and integrated into the Portuguese society. All of them have found their way into the country, and have all achieved the goals they dreamed of.

From a human security perspective Portugal offers migrants the stability and security they have been longing when coming here, the country has all the conditions from housing, work, safety, health, education that migrants want.

Conclusion

The puzzle that guided this thesis was clear. Over the last few decades, the number of people moving from Albania to other countries has not declined. Albanian leaving abroad represent a significant part of the population and their remittances are crucial to the country's development. Meanwhile, Portugal has become the host for a growing number of migrants. The number of Albanian migrants is small, but their experiences are rich and, more importantly, remain unaccounted for. The goal of this thesis was to start exploring their trajectories, unpack the factors that push them to Portugal, understand how they have experienced integration, and explore their prospects for the future. All of this was grounded on a broader concern to explore how these are linked to a perception of human security. To address this topic, four semi-structured interviews with Albanian migrants were carried. Naturally, a larger sample would certainly allow us to compare different experiences and make a stronger contribution.

The argument started by seeking to better understand the significance of migration for Albania. More specifically, the first chapter analysed the social, economic and political problems that have contributed to the various waves of migration in the country following the fall of the communist regime. The Albanian dictatorship ended, and it led a sudden feel of freedom that had been longed for 45 years. However, with that also came a lot of instability in the country. Civil conflicts emerged and with it insecurity at different levels. While different, the country still faces numerous challenges. These have continued to push Albanians out of the country. But like the country itself, Albanian migration has also evolved. If in the first decade the main destinations were Greece and Italy, the economic crisis pushed Albanians search for better opportunities and chose more prosperous countries such as Germany and the UK. The purpose, in addition to that already described, was also to map some of the key academic works delving into the Albanian diaspora and latter compare what they suggested with our findings.

The thesis continued by briefly looking at the complex relationship between migration and Portugal. To do so, we started by rapidly covering Portuguese history and then why the country is being chosen by a growing number of migrants. As we noted, despite the substantive number of foreign citizens coming from this region, there was not much literature regarding eastern Europe migration in Portugal. Moreover, this literature tends

to approach the region as a whole rather than focusing on specific countries. Eastern European migrants in Portugal, it suggested, often have a similar path towards Portugal regarding their jobs, often ending up doing domestic work, working on construction or in the sector tourism. Having established the empirical backdrop for the study, we then looked at the theoretical and methodological options.

The method used was semi-structured interviews. To conduct this study, I carried out interviews with four Albanian migrants that are currently living in Portugal. At the theoretical level, I opted to use the vocabulary of human security, since it foregrounds individual experiences and has a strong link to migration. Human security also covers multiple dimensions, from food to health, sanitation, education or financial insecurity. This offered a good link with the factors pushing the interviewees to move, but also with their experiences in the host country. It then showed how the recent history of Albania continues to be characterized by a generalized absence of human security. By and large, Albanians have faced human insecurity in their country for many years. They therefore saw migration as potential pathway to escape this conditions of insecurity. They seek to escape because they could not see a future where their own nation would provide for their needs. Carrying out semi-structured gave participants room to bring their own thoughts and personal stories to the forefront.

The following chapter then brought all of this together. Divided in two sections, it started by analysing the life trajectories of these four Albanian migrants, focusing on their motivations, experiences and expectations. As it was noted, interviewees shared a common opinion regarding integration and sense of belonging. They were moved by different factors: political instability but also the search for a good place to invest. They noted that while living in Portugal for several years, they were rarely confronted with prejudice. In fact, out of the four participants only one could remember something akin to discrimination. For them, this is justified by two reasons: cultural and physical similarities. Learning the language, they noted, made the process much smoother. Briefly, in the second section the insights that emerged from interviews were also compared with the literature previously explored. Overall, the Albanian citizens felt very integrated and fulfilled in Portugal, something that did not happen in Italy and Greece, where they were victims of stereotypes and racism. While given the small sample of interviews there are some important limitations to this thesis, we hope that this exploratory case study was

able to signal the social and academic importance of also considering and exploring the experiences of smaller migrant communities that often go unnoticed by the literature.

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