

Youth Mobilities, Crisis and Agency in Greece: Second Generation Lives in Liminal Spaces and Austere Times

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This paper explores various dimensions of “mobility” and “agency” among second generation immigrants in Greece who have experienced the economic crisis throughout their studies at Higher Education Institutions. Following their studies in Greece, second generation youth migrants graduated at a time when the crisis had already been leading hundreds of thousands of mostly highly skilled Greeks to emigration, resulting in a severe “brain drain” for Greece. First generation immigrants’ investment in their children’s education has been vital as an integration strategy and as a means of achieving social mobility. It has also been an asset during crisis times when the prospect of re-migration seems more than a possible option setting new challenges for youth mobility on a local, global and transnational level. Nevertheless, the vast majority of our participants manifest their will to remain in Greece and struggle for their future in the host country. Through in-depth interviews with 130 participants, all second generation Albanian, Bulgarian and Romanian immigrants in Greece, 30 born in the host country and the rest in the country of origin, the paper addresses youth agency in relation to geographical mobility, education and personal development.

Keywords: Mobility; Education; Crisis; Second Generation Migrants; Agency

Setting the Scene

In recent years, the theme of mobility and youth has proved to be of vital interest to interdisciplinary migration studies scholarship since the phenomenon has intensified after the on-set of the economic crisis. This paper explores various dimensions of this topic from an ethnographic perspective and further enhances migrant youth studies more broadly. In the challenges shaping migrant lives and identities in a globalized world and a global economic and social crisis, youth migrants are called to respond to this by negotiating various crucial life-course transitions. Our empirical data comes from Greece; a European Union country from the so-called “peripheral member states”, which is plagued by youth unemployment and

labor-market precarity. The paper exemplifies how Albanian, Bulgarian and Romanian youth, as second generation migrants in Greece, act as agents of change and continuity by making their own choices for their lives in an era of economic and social crisis. More specifically, it examines the following core question:

How do migrant youth respond to the restrictions for social advancement and access to opportunity that a context of crisis sets in the host country?

Additionally, the subthemes that emerge in the analysis illuminate the issue of non-capital investment in education, taken by first generation migrants in Greece, a topic that has been examined elsewhere (Michail, 2009), the issue of transnational mobility among the sending and the host country (Michail, 2013; Michail & Christou, 2016), as well as the issue of return (Vathi et al., 2016). Taking into account that, “possessing mobility capital is an antecedent of advantage, just as assuredly as social and cultural capital are” [and that] “the opportunities for mobility are far from uniform: the wealthy and privileged enjoy many more opportunities for being on the move than the poor” (Gulson & Symes, 2017, p. 126), *how is migrant youth agency shaped by family views regarding investment in education?*

The paper begins by setting the scene in providing a brief chronicle while exploring the structural preconditions and the actual conditions that led to the economic and social crises in Greece. Then it explores the emigration and “brain drain” from Greece of mainly youth motivated by necessity and focuses on second generation immigrants’ narratives in understanding agency and mobility/immobility as well as social mobility perspectives in contemporary Greece. Finally, we discuss the importance that migrants attach to education in achieving successful mobility and we bring to the fore family migrant experiences, as well as second generation immigrants’ experiences having reached early adulthood and successfully having completed higher education studies in the host country. Their narratives articulate

insights into the ways they react to emergent and experiential crises, the degree of their resilience in current adverse conditions and ways of responding to new challenges.

Crisis, emigration and the loss of human capital from Greece

The economic crisis in Greece that followed the global economic recession in 2008 and was connected to both structural weaknesses, meaning the defects of the Greek state, economy and society, and to Greece's joining a flawed monetary union and a badly designed Eurozone (Varoufakis, 2013), continued all through the following years up to the present. According to Labrianidis & Vogiatzis (2013, pp. 525-526), "when the debt crisis appeared in the country, the institutional setting within the Eurozone proved to be unprepared or unwilling to provide the financial markets with a clear signal that a support plan for Greece was set [...] this unwillingness reflects the splitting of the Eurozone into 'core' (mainly Germany and France) and 'periphery' (Greece, Spain, Portugal, Ireland and Italy), in which the 'periphery' has been powerless in competing against the 'core', despite the financial support it received through the Community Structural Frameworks over the years, due to the constraints by the European Monetary Union (EMU). Thus, extended current account deficits and surpluses were created within the EU during the past years". Three bail-out programs, accompanied by harsh austerity measures led the majority of the Greek society to a state of economic depression and psychological desperation. Meanwhile, the inability of the Greek economy to take advantage of the highly educated population in the national labor market (brain-waste) also contributed to the low competitiveness of the Greek economy (Labrianidis & Vogiatzis, 2013; King et al., 2016).

At the same time, the crisis resulted in a changing social and political environment within Greece where old ethno-national and historical narratives that fed the Modern Greek state's rhetoric have been challenged, disputed and blamed for the present dramatic situation (Michail & Christou, 2016; Christou, 2016). Furthermore, domestic reasons for the

malignancies of the Greek state and private sector, as well as bureaucracy and political corruption have all been blamed (Pratsinakis et al., 2017), although, it has been argued that “this crisis has nothing whatsoever to do with any of these very real malignancies [and that] bankruptcy was inevitable as was the death spiral that has caused our quadruple cataclysm: exploding debt, negative investment, insolvent banks, and a delegitimized polity” (Varoufakis, 2013, p. 45).

In such an environment of disaster and uncertainty on a national and European level, contemporary youth need to dream and plan their future. The country is devastated experiencing the deepest social and economic crisis in its modern history and its relations with European partners/creditors are fuelled with suspicion and mistrust. Furthermore, Greece is presented as the ‘G’ of the ‘PIGS’ within Europe, a horrible acronym launched by the financial markets, referring to the troubled and heavily-indebted peripheral European countries (Portugal, Ireland, Greece and Spain).¹ Seen from another angle, Greece is viewed as “the laboratory in the recurrent experimentation of neoliberal governance, and as such, by extension, the target of an implicit neocolonialist relationship at the core of the European agenda, coupled with a populist propaganda of racist discourse, and the institutionalizing of xenophobic mechanisms has diverted from its founding principles of democracy, peace and unity to one of bullying, arrogance and division with transforming Greece into a ‘debt colony’” (Christou, 2016, pp. 2-3).

Petmesidou (2013) suggests, that at the European level, crisis ridden countries of the EU periphery (mostly Greece) are taken to be “the canary in the coal mine” [...] “with respect to testing the limits to social sustainability of harsh austerity, drastic retrenchment, and rising insecurity” (p. 190), while Herzfeld (2011) observes, that “the economic debt crisis that

¹ Some analysts use PIIGS to include Italy – Europe's longstanding biggest debtor.

makes Greece a potential sinkhole for global capitalism (or at least its European incarnation) has engendered enormous, and equally visible public anxiety: rows of deserted shops, sometimes violent street demonstrations, open despondency among the middle class that thought it was rising and found instead that it was sinking, and equally open fury against a political elite that was praised for its cunning when things were going well but accused of moral bankruptcy when its antics led to disaster” (p. 23).

Economic and humanitarian crises that resulted in the unfolding human tragedy in the Mediterranean led to the European Agenda on Migration (EC, 2015) as an effort to control irregular migration and develop opportunities for legal migration, and at the same time, manage borders and patrol maritime zones effectively. According to Eurobarometer survey data (autumn 2017), when asked about their main concerns, immigration remains on top of the issues facing the EU most frequently as cited by citizens (39%)². Terrorism (38%) remains the second most frequently cited issue. It is well ahead of the economic situation (17%), the state of Member States' public finances (16%) and unemployment (13%). Immigration is the number one concern for the EU in all Member States, except Spain and Portugal. Numbers show clearly that European citizens perceive migration as a major issue of concern. For the Greek case, Herzfeld (2011) suggests that “the crisis allows Greeks to blame two very different sets of outsiders for the present malaise: the wealthy managers of the IMF and foreign banks, and the indigent immigrants on the streets” (p. 23).

According to the Bank of Greece report (Lazaretou, 2016), Greece ranks fourth in the European Union in migration outflow and the proportion of the workforce in the country. Cyprus is first, followed by Ireland and Lithuania. It ranks third after Cyprus and Spain in the

² Immigration has gained ground for the first time since autumn 2015 (58%) while it was cited by 45% in autumn 2016, and 24% in autumn 2014.

percentage of young emigrants. Specifically, the outgoing Greeks, only in 2013, represented more than 2% of the total workforce of the country, while the proportion of people aged 25-39 years was over 50% of all emigrants. Educated people with professional experience, headed mainly to Germany, the United Kingdom and the United Arab Emirates (Lazaretou, 2016). This brain-drain includes both native and immigrant youth (Fotopoulos, 2015; Triandafyllidou & Gropas, 2014). According to the Greek Statistical Authority over half a million people emigrated from 2010 to 2014. During 2008-2010 over half of the emigrants were foreign nationals, while during 2011-2013 Greek nationals constituted more than 50%. Since then emigration rates seem to decline but still over 100,000 leave the country annually (Pratsinakis et al., 2017). For over a decade, the country is losing human capital together with the state funds that have been invested in their education, while the reception countries reap the benefits from this inflow of skilled labor force in which they have not invested (Labrianidis & Vogiatzis, 2013). Research carried out by Labrianidis & Pratsinakis (2016) revealed that two thirds among the post-2010 emigrants held university degrees and a considerable number among them are postgraduate degree holders. In such a turbulent, insecure and uncertain economic and social environment in a country that, on top of the crisis, is currently strongly affected by one of the most significant influxes of refugees in its history³ (Clark, 2007), and at the same time a severe “brain drain”, second generation immigrant youth are struggling to build their lives under the most adverse social and economic conditions.

³ The dynamics of the humanitarian tragedy that followed the Treaty of Laussane in 1923 and the subsequent exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey that resulted to 2 million refugees on both sides, bear a striking resemblance to what is happening in the area today.

These migrants belong to the so called “crisis generation” since they were raised and spent their late adolescence and early adulthood during the decade of the crisis. They constructed their identity in a social and political reality which was not formed by them and were called to respond and react through personal choices, resilience and agency (Chalari & Serifi, 2018). Our research focus is on this vulnerable group and is based on their narratives in understanding subjectivity, agency and mobility/immobility in contemporary Greece as well as their social mobility perspectives. Family migrant experiences, as well as their own experiences as second generation immigrants, who have matured and successfully completed higher education studies in the host country, are articulated and their narratives give insights to the ways they react to emergent and experiential crises, the degree of their resilience in current adverse conditions and the ways of responding to new challenges. The central theme of this paper is immigrant youth motivations for geographical mobility as a response to unemployment, dramatic decrease of salaries and welfare allowances, as well as labor market precarity, due to the socio-economic crisis in the host country.

Methods and Social Actors

The research questions and subthemes provide the wider context of the study and although the paper does not claim to exhaust in great detail all these issues, nevertheless, it provides an overview of the central themes through an ethnographic and narrative account, namely that of migrant youth agency in relation to being and belonging. Hence, the paper offers a *narrative account of mobility as a practiced and experienced embodiment*: mobility as “a way of being in the world” (Cresswell, 2006, p.3), “requiring various forms of induction, training and education, and to which, in a world where mobility has taken on myriad and often, unevenly distributed manifestations, there is differential access” (Gulson & Symes 2017, p. 125).

The youth migrants constituting our target group in this research range from 19 to 30 years of age and they are either students, or graduates of Greek Higher Education Institutions.

This has been a methodological decision we have made to limit the analysis to the age of 30, because we are interested in examining the transition from student life to a life stage when participants take decisions in relation to their future livelihoods. Our research reveals that the prospect of re-migration and return seems more than a possible option which sets new challenges for youth mobility on a local, global and transnational level, but on the other hand, the vast majority of our participants demonstrate resilience to the hardships and lack of opportunities that the crisis has brought about and insist on remaining in the host country. “We are used to hardships, for us [the immigrants] life has never been easy. We have learnt to struggle and we won’t give up easily”, a 25-year-old Albanian man told us.

The data on which this paper is based derived during a follow-up ethnographic study of a larger project that took place during early spring/late autumn 2016 and throughout spring 2017. The initial research had taken place in 2012-2013 with 52 participants of the same age range (19-30), all second generation immigrants, but from Albanian origin only, and with the same interview guide as in the follow-up research almost four years later. We were interested in capturing the changes that the deepening of the economic and social crisis brought about in the meantime, to the way youth migrants were viewing and planning their livelihoods. During the follow-up research, we conducted in-depth interviews with 130 participants (100 women and 30 men), others than those who had participated in the original research, from 19 to 30 years of age, all second-generation Albanian (118), Bulgarian (5), Romanian (7) immigrants in Greece, 30 born in the host country and the rest in the country of origin. Almost half among those who were born in the country of origin (47/98) came to Greece between the ages of four to eight years old. From the remaining, 28 came to the host country between one to three and 23 between eight to twelve years old.

The respondents were contacted through personal acquaintances of the researchers’ and the interviews were conducted in 30 different cities of Greece (Athens, Thessaloniki,

Veroia, Kastoria, Florina, Edessa, Aridaia, Katerini, Volos, Ioannina, Kozani, Grevena, Lamia, Korinthos, Larisa, Agrinio, Pyrgos-Hleia, Preveza, Patra, Halkida-Evoia, Trikala, Arahova-Boiotia, Giannitsa, Tirnavos, Halkidiki, including five islands: Lesbos, Hydra, Corfu, Kefalonia, Irakleio-Crete). Half of our interviews, especially with participants residing in southern Greece and the islands, were conducted via Skype. All our participants, at the time of the research, were either students or graduates of Greek Higher Education Institutions. The narrative guide of the larger project included such themes as ‘family background’, ‘migration history and experience’, ‘ethnic identity and transnational ties’, ‘intergenerational transmission’, ‘legalization and naturalization’, ‘school experiences’, ‘university experiences and perspectives’, ‘socialization and integration’, ‘gender identities’, ‘economic crisis’, and ‘future plans and return’. The interviews were conducted in Greek, audio-recorded and then transcribed and translated during the data analysis stage process. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the anonymity of the participants.

Theoretical Considerations

In this work we draw in part from “network theory” in migration (Massey et al., 1993) which emphasizes the importance of networks through interpersonal transnational diasporic ties of kinship, friendship and common origin. “Network connections constitute a form of social capital that people can draw upon to gain access to foreign employment [...] Migrants are inevitably linked to non-migrants, and the latter draw upon obligations implicit in relationships such as kinship and friendship to gain access to employment and assistance at the point of destination” (Massey et al., 1993, pp. 448-449). Our respondents often refer to their ties with members of their extended families or friends with whom they are in contact and who are already established in various destination countries. These networks facilitate movement and lower the risks, as well as the emotional, psychological and economic cost. Consistent to this “network theory” is the so called theory of “cumulative causation”, viewing

international migration in dynamic terms as a cumulative social process (Massey et al., 1993, pp. 451-453). A proposition yielded by this cumulative social process, suggests, that during times of domestic unemployment, natives are difficult to be recruited back into jobs formerly held by immigrants, since a value shift occurs among native workers.

However, despite the resolve and resilience in enduring the constraints and challenges of the ongoing crises in Greece, migrant youth are constantly confronted by liminal spaces in their everyday lives primarily because they are ultimately a vulnerable migrant, often ‘othered’ group (cf. Michail & Christou, 2016). More specifically, a “liminal space is defined as a space that is on the ‘border’, a space that is somewhere in-between the front stage/back stage; a space ‘at the boundary’ of two dominant spaces, which is not fully part of either” (Shortt, 2015, p. 634) as undeniably the very notion of liminal space suggests uncertainty (Turner, 1974), a state of in-between and fluidity. As members of minority groups, second generation migrant youth are indeed somewhere in the middling process of not fully ever *being* ‘Greek’ even if Greece is their country of birth, upbringing and residence, but also invariably not fully incorporated within the parameters of their ethnic origin background, having frequently very little exposure to such ancestral dynamics, tradition, language, etc.

In Mahler and Pessar’s (2001) analytical framework in relation to social agency, what they term “gendered geographies of power”, migratory transnational practices affected by social locations (a person’s position within power hierarchies that confer certain advantages) and people’s substantive agency (as it is affected by individual characteristics like personal initiative, imagination, planning, and strategic thinking) are combined. Migrants as social actors are suggested as being situated within these hierarchies, which are not constructed by them, while social agency reflects their own resourcefulness and cognitive process. Other scholars (Jeffrey, 2012, p. 36) have also related “agency” with multiple structures of dominance stating that youth agency can only be apprehended by understanding how “youth

navigate plural, intersecting structures of power, including, for example, neoliberal economic change, governmental disciplinary regimes, and global hierarchies of educational capital” [while] the nature of ‘agency’ and young people’s capacity to act positively in relation to surrounding structures varies a great deal across space and time”. These variations we also perceive as liminal spaces grounded in austere times of multiple crises in Greece and juxtapose such against youth agency and resilience to such constraints.

In the following sections, we draw from empirical evidence, to present some of the participant narrative insights into how their current crisis shaped everyday life experiences are further challenged by having to contemplate present and future decisions, including re-migration.

Education and mobility in austere times

In the host country, one of the main priorities of first generation immigrants has always been to educate their children, so that they have a better life in the future and better prospects than themselves. At the same time, as our data reveals, parents under the pressure that the crisis imposes, maintain ties with relatives, co-nationals and acquaintances both in the home country and in other countries to facilitate possible future mobility of their children and ease the risks, as well as the emotional, psychological and economic cost (Massey et al., 1993).

Our informants claimed “*our parents insist that I keep contact with relatives in Romania in case I decide to move there in the future if the crisis deepens*”(Maria 21, Economics student); “*we visit Albania twice a year; most of our relatives have already returned*”; “*My parents bought a house in Tirana. They said that the crisis will force us to leave sooner or later, so we should be prepared*” (Anna 22, female Nursing student).

First-generation migrants have invested a lot in educating their children in Greece. Non-capital investment in education in the host country has opened up opportunities for social mobility anywhere in the world (Michail, 2009; Gogonas & Michail 2015). All participants,

except in one case only, report that their parents have been very supportive to them in their prospects of studying. They considered studying as a "*window to the world*" or "*the key to success in life*".

My parents have always pushed me to study because they themselves did not manage to complete secondary education and emigrated simply for a better life [...] In the village they come from, they did not have electricity all day long, often not even tap water and food was also not enough for the whole family. So, my parents left their country and here they tried hard, very hard, they have been deprived of too much to be able to raise me. Their only concern has been to educate me, so that I would be able to do something better in my life, not to do the same jobs that they were forced to do. (Dimitra 20, Albanian female Physiotherapy student)

The vast majority of our participants claim, that both their parents, as well as they themselves trust the Greek education system. On the issue of the integrity of studies at their home country, many among our Albanian participants told us, that anyone, who is willing to "buy" a degree, can do it in Albania. That the system is not meritocratic but profoundly clientelistic, many teachers are bribed and the degrees are of no value. That is why the overwhelming majority of our participants would in no case choose to follow university studies in Albania:

Institutions [in Albania] function on a clientelistic basis. Anyone by giving an amount of money could be accepted by the school they prefer. So, if I went [for studies in Albania], I could have gone anywhere I wanted to. The doors would be open. But I did not! (Elena 22, Albanian female student of Balkan, Slavic and Eastern Studies)

Students in Albania pay to pass their course exams. Although it does not seem true, it is. Many teachers ask for money in order to give you a pass grade and whoever does not admit it, I tell you, it is true. There are some things which are really bad in Albania. This we call 'korrupsioni' [corruption]. There is still this corruption in everything, even in education. That is, many graduate as doctors and are not familiar with medicine. I do not know how they will proceed in the future. Many graduates have a degree but do not deserve it. Not all of them but many. (Teo, 26 Albanian male student at the Technological Institute)

On the contrary to the Albanians, our Romanian informants praise the Romanian education system, especially their universities, and point out that they and their parents insist in pursuing an internship or postgraduate studies in Romania.

As soon as I finish Medical school here I will go to Romania for an internship. My parents insisted that I should have done also my first degree in Romania, but since I succeeded passing the entry examinations, I decided to study here. Soon after my graduation I will leave; I believe that it will be much easier to do my practice there.
(Simon, 23 Romanian male student of Medicine)

As it has already been stated, during the crisis, unemployment in Greece has reached its highest peak ever. According to Eurobarometer survey data (autumn 2017), when asked about the most important issue facing their country (Greece) at the moment, '*unemployment*' remains the most frequently cited by its citizens (49%)⁴, while to the personal question about the most important issues one is facing, on top comes '*the financial situation of one's household*' (35%), second most frequently mentioned is '*taxation*' (30%) and third '*rising prices/inflation and cost of living*'. According to Eurostat Unemployment Statistics (April, 2018), the highest unemployment rate both among the general population and youth in the EU were observed in Greece. Especially concerning youth unemployment, Greece presents the highest rates among all EU member countries during the last four years (52,4 in 2014, 49,8 in 2015 and 47,3 in 2016 and 45,4 in February 2018 while it was 22,7 in 2007)⁵. It is obvious that the economic crisis has severely hit young people and challenged their resilience as well as their insistence in trying to remain in Greece.

⁴ It was 55% in Autumn 2016.

⁵ The drop of unemployment rates among the youth that we observe from 2014-2018 is due to the high rates of emigration among this population category.

Remaining in the host country is not possible for many among our informants who see the prospect of re-migrating very possible in the near future. Many have stated that due to lack of chances for employment in Greece they consider the option of moving to another country. In that case, the majority among them, mostly Albanians, would prefer to migrate to another European country, while the Bulgarians and the Romanians would rather return to the country of origin. Our participants have repeatedly expressed that they are losing the hope that they will be able to fulfil their dreams in Greece.

Whatever you study, whichever university you graduate, you have no hope of working professionally, it is like pushing you to look abroad, find some work there, and continue your life there, because here basically there is no hope. That's the point! When unemployment is so high, when people who are already working, live in anxiety and in fear about keeping their jobs the next day, surely if these people do not know whether they will have a job, for us, the young ones, who have just completed our studies, there are no prospects in this country. (Jenny, 20, Albanian female student of Economics)

Our participants have pointed out the ‘sacrifices’ that their parents have made in the host country, in order to ensure for their children the possibility of education, security and prospects for a better life. Besides, second generation immigrants, like natives, often express their unwillingness to do the jobs that their parents used to do as first generation immigrants and instead, they consider re-migration or even return as the best option for them. This finding leads us to the theory of “cumulative causation” (Massey et al., 1993, pp. 451-453) which suggests that during times of domestic unemployment, natives are difficult to be recruited back into jobs formerly held by immigrants, since a value shift occurs among native workers. The same value shift occurs also among second generation immigrants who have dreamt a life that would not resemble their parents’ life. First generationers having invested in their children’s education over a long period of time and at any cost, encourage them to migrate and pursue a job that would best fit their qualifications and open up new horizons in

their lives. Under these conditions though, we have observed that the majority of our second generation immigrant young respondents perform considerable resistance to emigration. They demonstrate resilience to adverse conditions and insistence in remaining in Greece. This nevertheless puts them in a state of a “dead-end” with value shifts in terms of labor on the one hand, and labor scarce availability in the host country on the other.

My father says: “we [meaning the parents] didn’t endure so much in vain as immigrants in this country! We came for you, to give you a better future. We don’t want to see you doing the same jobs as we do. You have education. We had nothing but our empty hands and empty stomach”. He used to be a builder. Now he does whatever job he finds. He is disappointed. I do not want the same life for myself. I do not want to leave Greece, but I might have to. (Elvis, 20 Albanian male, Electric Engineer Graduate)

Our participants have pointed out their moral obligation towards their parents to support them now that they are growing old and getting tired to make a new start in another country.

I must work to support my parents. They have tried hard to build a life here in Greece and now they can hardly make ends meet. My father has already returned to his village in Albania and cultivates the fields. My mother stayed here with us, me and my brother. She still has work and she doesn’t want to return to Albania. She works as an exclusive night nurse and supports us to finish our studies. As soon as I graduate, I will go to Germany for work. We have relatives there and they will help me to find a job. It is my turn now to help my parents! (Simon 22, Albanian male student of Technological Institute)

Competition for job placements among well qualified youth in Greece is getting very hard. Many graduates decide to follow postgraduate studies to increase their chances of finding a job. The overwhelming majority of our participants (90%) report that the finances of both the family and their own do not allow them to follow postgraduate studies. This means that they become less competitive in the labor market and they face the risk of unemployment or employment in areas completely unrelated to their studies.

My future plans ...because my parents' money is dropping and I do not get enough myself, I do not know. I think that the economic crisis has shattered my dreams, we cannot dream anymore. (Dora 21, Albanian female graduate student of Education).

I do not have opportunities in Greece, research activities are no longer funded, research centers do not even provide the right prospects ... and all this leads me to leave Greece, which means, I will again be an immigrant in another country. I will migrate for a second time. I will move away from what I have learned, from my family in general all over again. If I could, I would have stayed here because I know the language, I have my family, I'm used to the lifestyle in this country, but I cannot! I could have stayed here and make something simpler, but I want to follow my dreams. (Giota 20, Albanian female student of Physics).

I think that ... in our days only few people can dream ...I think we do not do what we like, we do what we can afford to do. Our times do not allow us to have dreams. (Katerina 26, Albanian female graduate of Nursing).

Eleni, used seven times the phrase "I'm afraid" within a few sentences. The crisis has filled her with fear and worries she will never be able to work as a teacher of Physics, which is her dream:

I'm afraid, I won't be able to find a job in my profession. I mean, to work as a teacher of Physics, that's what I'm afraid of! I'm afraid, that while I want to complete my studies and do a Master's degree afterwards, I'm afraid, I won't be able to do it although I want it so much! I'm afraid, I will end up a salesperson or a waitress. I wish I was not afraid of the future. I wish things were better so that we had a chance to work in jobs related to our studies ... that's what I'm afraid of! (Eleni 19, Albanian female student of Physics).

Most of our informants have excluded the possibility of going abroad for post-graduate studies due to financial constraints, but 23% among them do not exclude the possibility of migrating to other countries to search for jobs. Many of them, like Simon above, intend to use networks of relatives and acquaintances living abroad to get support for a new start. Even among them though, the overwhelming majority intend, before they make the decision to

emigrate, to exhaust every possible opportunity to find a job and remain in Greece.

My parents want the best for me. Neither me, nor they, want me to emigrate to another country before I first try my luck here. If necessary, I will leave. As much difficult as it may be at first, I'll be fine, I'll get used to it. My parents believe that one's home country is where there is work. (Eni 21, Albanian male student of Education).

Many among our participants have repeatedly suggested that their parents have spent the most productive years of their lives in Greece, they have made every possible effort to make it work in the host country, regardless of the adversities and they do not have the energy and stamina to make a new start somewhere else. In case things get worse, these people, the first generation immigrants, would prefer to return to the country of origin (65%). However, young people, especially Albanians (90%), do not seem inclined to return to Albania. In case they were forced to leave, they would have liked to go to another European country, with Germany and Great Britain being the first most desirable destinations. They claim, especially the Albanians, that their country of origin does not attract them to return, and they do not consider that there are more prospects for work there than in Greece. Moreover, the political and social context in Albania does not seem appealing to them. Those first generationers, who return, leave their adult children behind, since the second generation migrants seem unwilling to follow their parents to their ancestral homeland (Michail, 2013). Our Romanian and Bulgarian participants though see it as a possible option to return to their country of origin in the future.

Emotion(ality) vs liminality: youth agency and family legacy – concluding thoughts

While the current landscape of austerity and crisis continues to challenge Greek society, the repercussions are severe for the current well-being of the wider population, with prospects of future aspirations for youth crushed at inception due to rising uncertainty and unemployment. Youth migrants are often in the destabilizing position of having to negotiate multiple roles: as migrants, students, children, siblings, etc. along with their overarching categorization as

migrants of different ethnic origins than the majority population which is Greek. From discussions with participants we can draw insight that they often wish to demonstrate their resilience to challenges, autonomy and individuality in succeeding to achieve personal and professional goals without jeopardizing kinship and family relations through separation and additional re-migration. Parents are also often heart-broken when offspring have to leave the family nest but when they realize that opportunities in Greece are limited then they do encourage them to seek employment and post-graduate training overseas.

The above taps into a combined emotional vortex shared by parents and siblings which includes the high level of expectations that parents have of their investing into migration in the first place; the high aspirations that children have of attaining prestigious careers supported by solid excellence in education and training; the guilt and concern that children feel in thinking that their dreams might be a burden on their parents in having to work harder to support them; the dread that youth overall feel in having to do jobs that they essentially despise but have no other option in making a living and supporting themselves and frequently their families at large.

The very uncertainty of the context of austerity in Greece is a space of liminality for youth migrants who need to navigate in this threshold of ambiguity as regards the choices they can make, the degree of agency they can show and the affectivity with which they need to negotiate all these acts. Although social networks continue to support migrant youth aspirations, there is a parameter of emotionality that also shapes decisions since family ties are strong in all the migrant communities we studied.

The emotional underpinnings of such decisions are part and parcel of the very 'nature' of migration; uprootings and re-groundings, transplantations and transmigrations or transnationalisms of varying kinds, all in all lives in movement even if sedentary in the new homeland, the emotional labor is often a whirlwind of feelings. As Christine, a 20 year old

Albanian female student of Agricultural Studies explains: “*The crisis is a condition that leads young people to a situation of despair and with no idea of what they are going to do as regards their futures*”. Such an agonizing uncertainty with the magnitude of pernicious circumstances goes beyond austere liminality but at the same time it highlights the potential of youth migrants in exercising direct agency in taking decisions despite the challenges involved.

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