



CASE STUDY:

The SPATIAL INTEGRATION of ALBANIAN IMMIGRANTS on ZAKYNTHOS
– *An Integrated Understanding of Local Dynamics* –





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PART I: INTRODUCTION

“A problem that I still see as important is a certain lack of ambition and general unadventurousness. Some geographers would still, I suspect, like to hide away from these interdisciplinary days [...].”

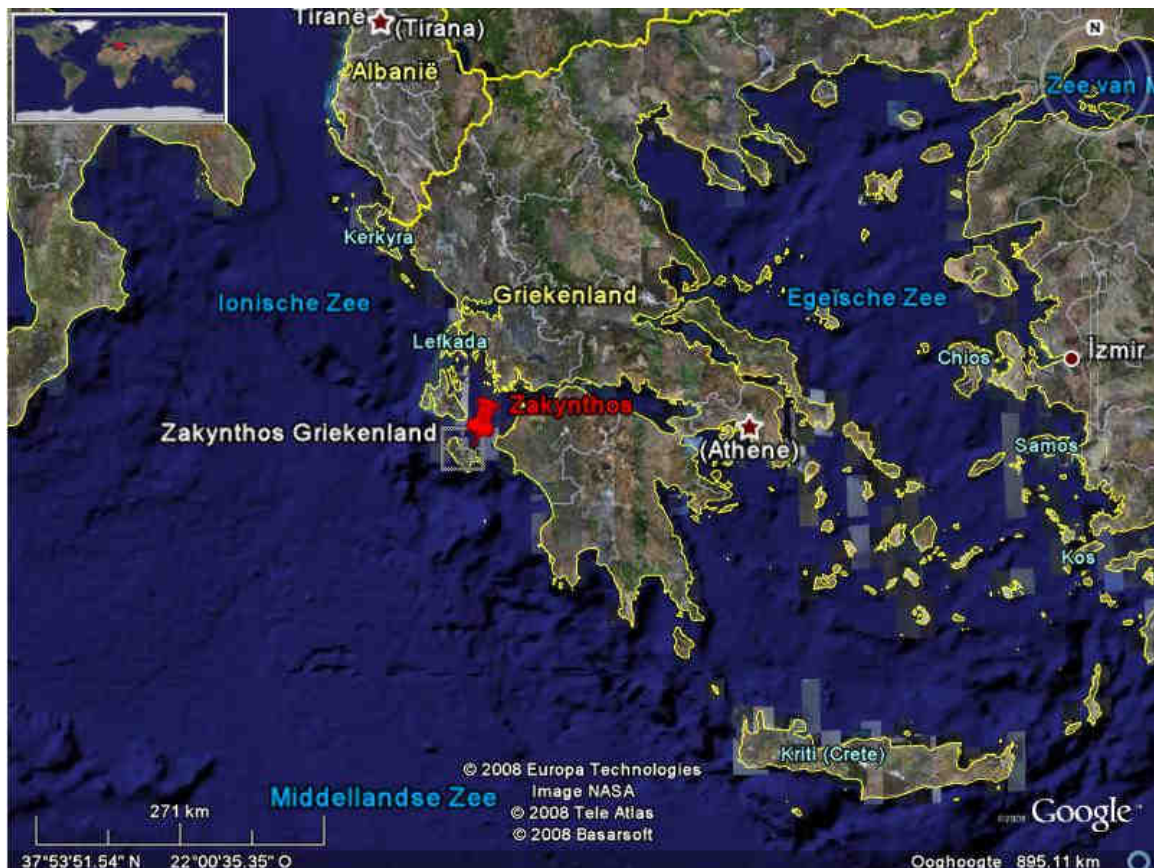
Nigel Thrift, 2002, p. 205

RESEARCH THEME

– LOCATION –

Zakynthos, positioned off the West coast of the Peloponnese in Greece (Map 1), is the third largest island in the Ionian Sea after Kefalonia and Corfu. Its Prefecture covers an area of 406 kilometers and has an all year round population of ca. 40.000 inhabitants. Traditionally, agriculture has long been the main employer of the Zakynthian labor force and the chief provider of the island's prosperity. Since the 1980s, however, following the establishment of an airport catering to international flights, the inhabitants of the island have greatly profited from ongoing developments in tourism. As a matter of fact, the exploitation of spectacular local panoramas such as, for example, that of the Shipwreck (*cover photo*) has served to turn the tourist industry into the primary source of income for Zakynthos nowadays, and it has undeniably been the most vital sector for Zakynthos to become the fairly affluent island that it is for Greek standards at present.

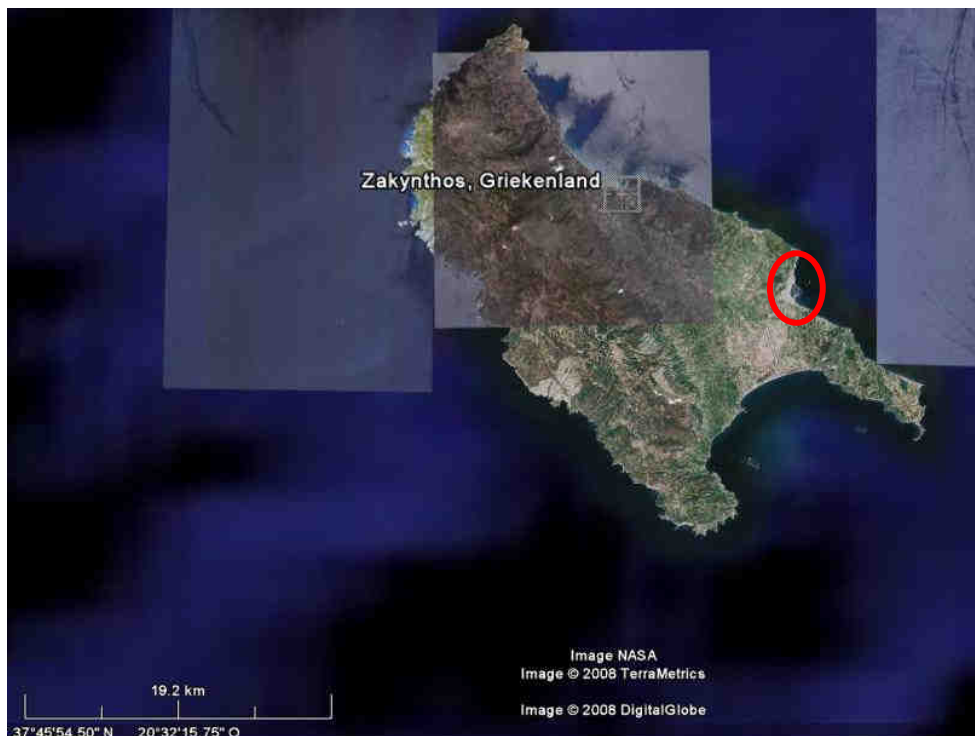
Map 1 – Locating Zakynthos in Greece



– TOPIC –

Ever since the borders between Greece and formerly communistic Albania were opened in 1991, numerous Albanians decided to migrate to Zakynthos in the attempt to improve their own standards of living and those of their families back home.¹ Hence, the striking feature of Zakynthos that has inspired scientific research to take place in this location is the fact that a notably large proportion of its total population is constituted by Albanian immigrants: the (un)official estimates range somewhere between 7.000-15.000!

Map 2 – Locating Zakynthos Town



A large number of the island's inhabitants, about 10.000 people, live in the main urban settlement on the eastern side of the island – Zakynthos Town (See Map 2). Although the estimates vary, the island's capital is deemed to house a minimum of 1400 and a maximum of 3000 Albanian immigrants. In view hereof, this case-study sought to look into the experiences of integration / segregation of these large numbers of Albanian immigrants by focusing specifically on their housing situations. In which areas of Zakynthos Town are the Albanian immigrants housed and in what conditions do they live? What is more, throughout this study the attempt is made to relate the features of this possible pattern of spatial (dis)integration to existing economic, political, and/or social forces of marginalization that are perceptibly affecting the level of spatial integration of immigrants in various countries all around the world.

¹ For the sake of clarity, this study has opted to exclude refugees as research subjects in view of the fact that the overwhelming majority of Albanians in Greece enters the country as economic migrants.

In fact, Zakynthos perhaps appears an obvious choice for many Albanians as it is relatively close in geographical distance from Albania. Yet, the arrival of migrants on Zakynthos also fits within a larger framework of specific changes that is presently promoted by globalized economic and political structures. These international dynamics put enduring pressure on the Zakynthian economy, thereby not only altering the needs of its local labor market, but essentially leading to a revision of the entire socio-political organization of the local community as well.

Conversely, as opposed to what seems to become an increasingly visible trend in the larger cities of Athens and Thessaloniki, at the outset there were several reasons that suggested that the distribution and the quality of Albanian immigrants' housing in Zakynthos Town would not necessarily make up for what is usually referred to as a pattern of socio-spatial segregation.

Firstly, economically speaking, immigrants on Zakynthos find themselves in a location that has a relatively lengthy agricultural and a fairly large tourist sector, which are highly affiliated with the construction sector and with domestic services as well. Nowadays, these particular sectors of the economy also happen to be those that, worldwide, have shown great reliance on immigrant labor forces, especially at peak levels of demand. Hence, the presence of a large pool of immigrant labor forces should serve to meet the requirements of the local labor market. This, in turn, would point towards greater employment opportunities for Albanian immigrants on Zakynthos, which would thus indicate a higher share of economic integration of immigrants in this particular area compared to other major urban centers. Such participation of Albanian immigrants in the labor market should provide proportionately higher incomes and thus better prospects of attaining respectable housing (conditions).

Secondly, immigrants on Zakynthos would also appear to be better off in political terms. In fact, considering that the 2001 Immigration Law called for decentralization of the regularization procedures of immigrants to the local municipalities, immigrants located in scarcely populated island territorialities that fall under regional and local competence avoid a confrontation with the bureaucratic chaos that generally typifies the organizational culture of Greece in major conurbations like, say, Athens. Thus, on Zakynthos it should be easier for Albanian immigrants to obtain their permits and claim their rights, which includes the right to shelter and equal opportunity.

Finally, Zakynthos has a long and fairly peaceful history of foreign occupation – including the Venetians, the French, and the English – and it is today a popular tourist destination for people from all over the world. It is therefore not entirely astray to assume that its local identity would comprise a tolerant and receptive perception of 'the Other', whereby its inhabitants could perhaps be less 'Albanophobic' than what appears to be the case in other regions of Greece. This should promote higher levels of social interaction between the two in the public/private sphere and serve to produce inter-ethnic and integrated social networks. Consequently, immigrants on Zakynthos possibly have greater opportunities in setting up the necessary social contacts and support networks, which would then enable them to gain easier access to the almost entirely exclusively privately-owned housing market that typifies Greece.

In order to turn these assumptions into facts – be it by means of verification or falsification – this research set out to analyze and understand the pattern of spatial integration of Albanian immigrants in Zakynthos Town. In view of the argumentation outlined above, despite the fact that up until now there was no valid supportive argumentation in favor of any particular stand towards the level of the spatial integration of Albanian immigrants on Zakynthos, this research assumed an optimistic starting point by attempting to pursue the examination of the legitimacy of the following viewpoint:

The specific interplay of political, economic, and social dynamics on Zakynthos generally promotes a positive pattern of spatial integration () of Albanians in Zakynthos Town.*

(*) = low levels of segregation and relatively good housing conditions

At a first (superficial) glance, it would indeed appear as though the native inhabitants living in Zakynthos Town and the Albanian immigrants still manage to live side by side quite peacefully and respectfully. However, a systematic analysis that actually turns this superficial perception into grounded fact or fiction has, up until now, been lacking. Although this research sets out to provide just that, in reality, my investigations will – admittedly – merely manage to conduct a so-called ‘introductory excursion’ into the topic. Considering the relatively short time-span available to complete this research, it will only really touch the tip of the iceberg. Still, the fact that there will be numerous complications yet to be unraveled hopefully inspires further research to elaborate on this particular matter. Hence, despite the acknowledged limitations of this study, it remains an analysis that eagerly attempts to reveal which forces – on micro- and macro-level – are beneficial and/or detrimental to the level of spatial integration of Albanian immigrants in an island region of Greece – areas which have generally remained an important component and representation of the modern Greek culture, but have all too often been neglected by scientific research.

GOAL & OBJECTIVES

To explain the goals and objectives of this study, several practical clarifications are indispensable with regard to the particular interpretation of the term ‘spatial integration’² throughout this research. In fact, the concept of ‘spatial integration’ throughout this research is used to refer to a combined evaluation of the geographical pattern of distribution of Albanian immigrants as well as the material quality of their housing conditions. I am aware of the fact that several academics like to denominate the interaction of these two analytical foci with the notion of ‘socio-spatial segregation’. Nevertheless, I believe this term may be misleading, in the sense that it seems to suggest that the distribution and the quality of immigrants’ housing is merely a spatial representation of their level of social integration. This level of social integration, in turn, is then perceived as a dependent variable to be related to and derived from their level of economic and political integration. I wish to stress the fact that in this study I do not reject the idea that social, economic and political aspects interact so as to produce a particular outcome. Actually, quite the opposite! However, I do object to this specific sequel of interaction that is commonly applied to explain the spatial configuration of immigrants. Instead, I claim that ‘spatial integration’ as such (composed of location and quality of housing) is the dependent variable to be explained by separate yet interactive economic, political, *and* socio-cultural (from here on referred to as ‘social’ for the sake of simplicity) variables.

Such an understanding of the concept of ‘spatial integration’ also serves to reflect the epistemologically integrated approach that was adopted towards this case-study. In fact, the aim of this research is not just to determine *where* and *how* Albanian immigrants live in Zakynthos, but also *why* they come to live the way they do. Hence, numerical or statistical records on the features of the houses that are inhabited by Albanian immigrants on Zakynthos are not the prime target of this research. As a matter of fact, the identification of the pattern of spatial distribution of Albanian immigrants and a rating of the conditions in which they are living compared to the standards of the native people – in other words, an actual assessment of the degree of spatial immigrant integration – is merely one of the objectives of this research. Instead, what this research really seeks to discover is how Albanian migrants in Zakynthos Town actually value their housing situation in view of the broader socio-economic and political context within which they live on the island. Considering the specific economic, political and social surroundings of their existence on Zakynthos, how do Albanians perceive their housing situation in Zakynthos Town? Therefore, the main focus lies on the personal life stories that the immigrants themselves have to tell with regard to their arrival and stay on the island. The ultimate goal would be to strive to understand the way they experience a certain housing situation from *their* viewpoint.

² Note that I deliberately opted to use the term ‘integration’ as opposed to the more commonly used concept of ‘segregation’ because the former does not have such immediate and irreversible connotations with failure as the latter does. Hence, applying the term ‘spatial integration’ was deemed to be a necessary subtlety considering the hypothetical nature of this study and the fact that an accurate assessment of the situation in different contexts in Greece is still pending, whereby it is not yet possible to confirm whether the trend is one of spatial immigrant integration or one of segregation.

SOCIAL RELEVANCE

In scientific literature Greece has commonly been associated with other Southern European countries in the discussions around the so-called 'new Southern European migration' that we are witnessing at the moment (Carella & Pace, 2001; King, 2002; Ribas-Mateos, 2004; Baldwin-Edwards, 2004). While Greece's migratory patterns undeniably share important features with those of other Southern European countries, the fact remains that the current proportions in Greece are simply enormous compared to any of these other countries, which makes the Greek experience indeed rather unique (Cavounidis, 2002). As a matter of fact, the 2001 Census showed that there were 762.200 (registered!) foreigners of more than a hundred different nationalities living in Greece, representing 7% of the total population at that point. What is more, in addition to the official numbers, various estimates claim there to be somewhere between 250.000 and 750.000 undocumented migrants more, thereby raising the total figure of the number of foreigners in Greece to more than 10% of the country's population (Lianos, 2001). The 2001 Census also revealed that an overwhelming majority of the immigrants that is present in Greece originates from the neighboring ex-communist countries, with more than 75% of immigrants coming from Albania and Bulgaria, and more than 65% coming from Albania alone. Overall, there is no other country in the EU that has such high proportions of foreigners composing its total population, nor is there any other EU country where the predominance of one single immigrant nationality is as pronounced as it is the case for Albanians in Greece!

Immigration to Greece is a fairly recent phenomenon that only really began in the early 90s. Up until that time, Greece had always been classified as a country of emigration rather than one of immigration. Only recently has this situation been inverted due to a combination of ongoing political and economic developments that are not only affecting the mobility patterns of people around the world, but are also contributing to turning Greece into an increasingly attractive destination for mounting numbers of immigrants from an enormously wide range of different countries, and then in particular from its neighboring Eastern European countries. As a result of these rapid and fairly drastic changes that Greece has undergone over the past two decades, it has not yet had much time to (formally) act upon this alteration of events, nor has it shown a particular eagerness or commitment to do so really. In reality, Greece was caught completely unprepared by these recent waves of immigration and is currently still trying to define which measures to adopt so as to be able to deal with such large numbers of new arrivals. Yet, to reflect and adapt to this changing reality, it is all the more important that the Greek nation now compels itself to develop an apposite and systematic approach to the issue of immigration as well as that of integration.

Clearly, it is hard to develop appropriate policies if there is no evidence to support a certain course of action over another. In fact, although there finally appears to be growing interest in the matter, concrete data and reliable information on the situation of Albanian immigrants in Greece today remains scarce. So far, most fieldwork on immigrants and immigration-related issues has been conducted in the two main urban centers of Greece – Athens and Thessaloniki – which are in effect hosting the largest numbers of immigrants. Only limited research has been conducted in the island regions of Greece, which represent a

large part of the Greek landscape nonetheless, and are also inhabited by a significant number of immigrants (King & Connell, 1999; Kasimis et al., 2003). In fact, in the case of Zakynthos, statistical data is incomplete and contradictory so overall it remains unclear whether it is 1 out of every 3 inhabitants that is Albanian, or 1 out of 5. Yet, despite this ambiguity, it is clear that Albanians constitute an extraordinary proportion of the total population of the island. Athens and Thessaloniki are perhaps hosting much larger absolute numbers of immigrants (132.000 and 27.000 respectively), but they are far from reaching such proportionate figures!

Astoundingly, in spite of continuously mounting numbers of migrants in rural areas of Greece (Rovolis, 2006), no scientific research has explicitly and profoundly addressed the issue of immigrant integration in its island regions through an international lens so far, with the exceptions of the studies by Kasimis and Papadopoulos (2005) and Kasimis et al. (2003). Still, while there generally appears to be little scientific attention for the experiences of rural Greece, one thing that is continuously stressed in those few relevant publications is that the way both the immigrants and the locals experience these changing conditions differs from one region to the other in Greece, and even from one locality to the other (Hatziprokopiou, 2003; Kasimis and Papadopoulos, 2005; Woods, 2007). For these reasons, an analysis of the specific experience of Zakynthos, which has so far largely been neglected, is indeed a necessary and useful contribution of knowledge. Ultimately, the awareness and understanding of the differences between the experiences of the various regions in Greece helps national/ regional/ local governments to design and implement more appropriate and up-to-date policies to be able to face the issue of immigrant integration.

Since any research in the field of migration in Greece is still in its infancy and even accurate statistical evidence on general characteristics of Albanian immigrants is still insufficient at this stage, the publications that are actually addressing their patterns of spatial distribution and assessing their housing conditions throughout the country are all the more scarce. Moreover, those few accounts that do exist (on Athens and Thessaloniki especially) appear to claim that the spatial segregation of (Albanian) immigrants is not yet as pronounced in Greece as it is in other Western European countries (Iosifides and King, 1998; Malheiros, 2002). This might have been true at some point in history since these reports are mostly based on data recollections of the mid-90s, but in ten years time things have changed dramatically! In reality, the reports on both Athens and Thessaloniki show reason for great concern for future developments as the overall picture for the spatial integration of Albanian immigrants does not look all too bright in a country whose political system appears to be reluctant to adjust to their presence, and whose population has developed a peculiar form of 'Albanophobia' (see Lazaridis & Wickens, 1999; Triandafyllidou, 2000b; Baldwin-Edwards, 2001b; Lawrence, 2005; Pavlou, 2007).

Yet, decent shelter is one of the most basic necessities of any human being – in effect a fundamental constitutional right in most European countries. Hence, in view of the growing numbers of migrants on Greek soil looking for a place to settle down, Greece will eventually find itself compelled to develop apposite policies addressing the issue of integration and of their housing in particular. This research sets out to attain a comprehensive picture of the respective individual experiences, thereby helping to recognize and decide which issues need to be paid more attention to and eventually changed.

SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

In social sciences it is often mentioned how, since the past couple of decades, we have entered a so-called postmodern era – an era in which we realize that the complexity and the fragmentation of social phenomena is so enormous that social scientists can no longer claim to uphold any ‘universal truths’, and where we admit that all we can really do is attain a partial understanding of certain aspects of a larger picture; we can only present ‘little narratives’ (Heelas, 1998). Hence the progressive and upcoming idea that “social scientists should be more reflexive, less simplistic (that is, more willing to acknowledge complexity) and less convinced of the certainty of their own views than has hitherto been assumed to be the norm for their kind of practice” (Smith, 1998, p. 310).

An interesting development in the ‘mentality’ of present geography is that the entire scope and frame of reference of a geographer’s research seem to have broadened as “interdisciplinary work aims to reduce segregation of knowledge [...], with the objective of integrating ideas, concepts, and methodologies from various disciplinary traditions in order to promote a more complete understanding [...] leading to an ever more productive hybridity of disciplines, capable of analyzing and perceiving a complex world in a comprehensive, nuanced, holistic and sensitized matter” (Lau et al, 2008, p. 554). Particularly human geographers now have the opportunity of tapping into an extensive range of resources to design and approach a specific research topic; they are no longer confined within the limits of a specific ‘jargon’ of their own discipline.

Regarding housing studies, the present potentiality of interdisciplinary research is underlining the idea that “the cultural geographies of home are shaped by political and economic processes, and that domestic spaces are inextricably bound to global inequalities”. (Blunt, 2005, p.510) Essentially, social scientists who are interested in the study of residential patterns must admit that “housing is not consumed in isolation from other aspects of life [but that] all of these elements need to be considered together as it may be impossible to disentangle them satisfactorily”. (Clapham, 2002, p. 64)

I therefore concord with Nigel Thrift in that the discipline of geography is entering what he likes to refer to as ‘exciting times’ (Thrift, 2002). Especially because indeed, geographers at present find themselves in the midst of a fascinating debate – one that is encouraging a fundamental turning point and diversification of both the focal points and methodologies pursued by its practitioners (Jacobs, 1993; Lees; 2003). At last, the traditional positivist ideals of what constituted ‘science’ are slowly but surely destabilized and challenged by the ever growing concern with a more ‘critical’ geography that emphasizes the idea that all scientific knowledge is somehow ‘constructed’ and inevitably perspectival (Blomley, 2006). In particular in the field of human geography – the study of (the relationship between) people and space – one cannot escape the epistemological and methodological implications for research that derive from the changing conceptualizations put forward by these ‘new’ forms of geography (Jacobs & Gabriel, 2004).

Over the past couple of years, the idea that 'place' has three necessary features – a) geographical location, b) material form, and c) investment with meaning and value (something that will be referred to as 'living context' throughout this research) – has started to become a fundamental conception in social sciences (Gieryn, 2000, Mallett, 2004). In this respect, it is reassuring to notice how more and more social scientists are persuaded that "in order to understand the fulfillment that housing provides it is necessary to employ a framework which places the subjective nature of the meanings held by households at the centre of the analysis" (Clapham, 2002, p. 60), principally because viewing housing development processes from this perspective is dynamic and places people and not the physical environment at its epicenter (Jacobs, 2002, p. 103).

In reality, more than ever when attempting to study immigrant housing patterns, there must be recognition for the fact that "[...] our capacity to imagine is an important factor shaping the way we experience our environment" (Jacobs, 2002, p. 110). Indeed, spaces are turned into specific 'places' by the meanings and associations that individuals attribute to them, whereby "the concept of 'place' irrevocably ties the physical world with the social, cultural and emotive worlds of people" (Easthope, 2004, p. 136). Little by little, "there is a growing view that a dwelling is a complex object that has different meaning to different people according to their circumstances" (Coolen et al., 2002b, p. 114) – an issue that is further elaborated upon by Mallett (2004). Therefore, "it is important to explain the concept of 'home' as it is understood in different contexts by different people" (Easthope, 2004, p. 135). And, more significantly, "the meaning of housing to individual households cannot be taken for granted or encapsulated in simple generalizations. A research approach is needed which places the meanings held by households at the centre of the analysis and involves a research method which can identify them" (Clapham, 2002, p. 61).

Yet, despite the surge of relativistic thoughts, in housing studies so far, it still appears "there is little focus on the relationship between the attitudes and behavior of the actors and the constraints and opportunities they face" (Clapham, 2002, p. 59). Additionally, the main center of attention has tended to be policy-oriented research (Kemeny, 1992; Allen, 2005). As a matter of fact, in my opinion, the studies of the spatial patterns of immigrants in the Western world are all too often 'desensitized', on account of too little notice for personal experiences and/or too much focus on purely structural and statistical outcomes.

Nevertheless, (post?)modern housing studies have growingly started to highlight how important it is to acknowledge the fact that the residential behavior of people in a certain setting is the result of the interaction of global forces with specific local dynamics as well as individual characteristics, and therefore a highly contextualized matter (Gieryn, 2000; Jacobs and Manzi, 2000; Musterd & van Zelm, 2001; Coolen et al., 2002a and 2002b; Clapham, 2002; Scheiner and Kasper, 2003; Easthope, 2004; Jacobs et al., 2004; Smith, 2004; Ærø, 2006; Krysan, 2008; Poros, 2008). At last there appears to be appreciation for the idea that "for housing academics writing from a constructionist perspective, research can never be simply a question of discovering facts and presenting them in a format amendable to policy makers. [...] The strength of constructionism is the focus on broader social processes and its emphasis on the importance of social, political, and economic context." (Jacobs et al., 2004, p. 3) It is to such strand of geographical knowledge and understanding of 'housing studies' that this research aims to make a small (yet hopefully interesting) contribution.

PART II: 'IN THEORY'

"I think it is misleading to talk about 'housing theory' as though there is a special theory specifically designed for housing. Rather, there are general theories that can be applied to housing and that can link housing to other dimensions of society. One of the problems that housing research still needs to overcome is the tendency of housing researchers to bury themselves in narrow housing issues, or 'housing studies' as it is sometimes called, without being able to see the wider theoretical relevance or embed them in their wider societal context".

Excerpt from interview with Kemeny
(in Allen, 2005, p. 100)

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Since both the US and Europe have been confronted with immigrant communities of low socio-economic status who tend to cluster in specific parts of the cities, the formation of so-called 'ghettos' (Massey and Denton, 1993; Marcuse, 1997; Reardon and O'Sullivan, 2004) and the issue of spatial segregation have received a lot of attention in scientific literature over the past couple of decades (Room, 1997; Samers, 1998; van Kempen & van Weese, 1998; Musterd & de Winter, 1998; Freeman, 2000; Van Kempen et al., 2000; Musterd & Deurloo, 2001; Mohan, 2002; Poulsen et al., 2002; Chung & Brown, 2007). The prevailing theoretical explanations of the matter usually focus either on the economic or on the political dynamics that have an effect on 'socio-spatial' segregation of migrants (Kemeny, 1992; Burgers, 1996; Musterd, 2005). On the one side we find the economic (labor market) interpretations, which suggest that specific spatial (dis)integration patterns are primarily caused by the changes that global economic restructuring is imposing on local economies and labor markets (Sarre, 1986; Sassen, 1990 and 1991; Hamnett, 1994; Fieldhouse, 1999;). On the other side there are the political (institutional) perspectives, claiming that spatial (dis)integration patterns vary in different types of welfare state, according to the extent to which these provide assistance to migrants and succeed in 'relieving' the pressures of present economic globalization (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Kesteloot & Cortie, 1998; Musterd & Ostendorf, 1998; Kemeny, 2001; Boelhouwer, 2006).

Although the established traditions in housing studies described above do address the implications of various socio-cultural features for the patterns of spatial (dis)integration to a certain extent, these do not pertain to their actual focal point, but tend to be intermingled into their economic or political analyses as a mere secondary component. Consequently, while these interpretations undeniably provide an interesting perspective on where and why residential concentration of relatively homogeneous groups occurs in cities today, they do not always manage to show how this phenomenon is actually experienced and internalized at the local level by the people themselves. In fact, both labor market and welfare perspectives on (immigrant) housing have commonly been criticized for overemphasizing the wider structural dynamics, neglecting the way individual actors are also active agents in the process that can alter the course of events in various contexts and/or simplistically assuming all individuals are universally rational decision makers. Still, "actors do not merely provide descriptions of events, but are themselves constitutive of wider policy discourses and conflicts". (Jacobs & Manzi, 2000, p. 36.) Yes, people are inevitably conditioned by structural forces, but that, by all means, does not imply that they are all similar and passive absorbers of a predetermined course of events. Instead, every individual actively responds to these globalizing processes in a personalized manner, constructing their own 'reality' and developing their own 'way of life' to fit their individual circumstances within a larger framework (*for similar 'survival strategies' of migrants in Italy and Spain see for example Kotic & Triandafyllidou, 2004; and Ramírez Goicoechea, 2005*).

Nowadays, "the re-emergence of research drawing upon social constructionist epistemologies marks an attempt to broaden the scope of housing studies [and] purports that an individual's experience is an active process of interpretation [i.e. interaction] rather than a passive material apprehension of an external physical world." (Jacobs & Manzi, 2000,

p. 36) In fact, individual residential careers depend on several factors, which include the financial situation, the existing governmental regulations, but also people's personal networks/preferences. Some housing studies have begun to refer to this sort of interactive combination with the concept of 'social constructionism' (Kemeny, 1992; Jacobs et al., 2004), some define it a focus on so-called 'pathways' (Clapham, 2002), while others prefer to apply the term 'lifestyle perspective' (Scheiner and Kasper, 2003; Ærø, 2006). Throughout this research, what matters for the study of the housing patterns of immigrants is not so much the discussion concerning specific terminologies, as it is the present realization that to understand residential behavior/patterns of migrants it is necessary to have an integrated look at what developments are taking place with respect to a broad variety of social, economic, and political aspects that are all somehow affecting their spatial (dis)integration.

I believe it is a particularly fascinating development in housing studies that there is rising interest for the concept of lifestyles and the impact that these latter have for people's residential patterns and the interpretation of space. As a matter of fact, it is a direction that I strongly support! Regrettably, the debate surrounding the notion of lifestyle is too complex to be tackled here. For the time being, I must leave that to a more progressive stage of investigation. Still, reference shall be made to the idea of lifestyles whenever and in as much as it refers to specific personal preferences that influence respective housing patterns.

The difficulty in studying immigrant housing situations is that one has a vast array of literature to refer to: the theory of 'space', 'housing theory', and migration theory all relate to the topic. Accordingly, it is essential to bear consideration for some of the most important cornerstones of each field: Firstly, "places are doubly constructed: most are built or in some way physically carved out. [But] they are also interpreted, narrated, perceived, felt, understood, and imagined" (Soja qtd. in Gieryn, 2000, p. 465); Secondly, "urban problems, including those relating to housing, should not be treated in isolation from society at large but are best understood as results of a complex interrelationship between many processes" (Sarre et al, 1989, p.1). In fact, "housing markets [...] are fascinatingly diverse and importantly tied into local cultures, global finance, and the various sites of intervention and regulation between these scalar extremes" (Smith, 2004, p. 91); And finally, "integration is a multidimensional process which becomes manifest in different [political, social and economic, and cultural] domains of society" (Entzinger, 2000, p. 105), an understanding of which thus requires an interdisciplinary synthesis which brings together and integrates a range of perspectives, frameworks, theoretical stances and methodologies in order to study migration in a manner which is holistic and recognizes its multifaceted diversity (King, 2000).

Taken together, the above mentioned theoretical foundations suggest the meaning and value migrants bestow upon the geographical and material circumstances of their housing situation will primarily be shaped by their contextualized experiences in various collective domains. Therefore, in light of the (post)modern academic debate, throughout the analytical framework behind the idea of 'spatial integration' as it is understood here, this case-study opted to consider the implications of separate yet interactive economic, political and social 'modes of integration' – i.e. market exchange, welfare, and social networks (Musterd et al., 2000). Below follows an elaboration of these three investigative dimensions and their respective consequences for the housing situation of migrants on three regional scales: 1) the 'Developed World', 2) Southern Europe, and 3) Greece.

1. SPATIAL INTEGRATION OF IMMIGRANTS IN THE 'DEVELOPED WORLD'

As more people than ever before are moving across the wider globe to settle in a foreign country where they believe they will have greater opportunities and a brighter future than what would otherwise await them in their country of origin, Castles and Miller recognize the globalization and the acceleration of migration as two of the general tendencies of migration movements around the world (Castles and Miller, 1998, p.8). However, at the same time that a predominantly neoliberal discourse has managed to develop a globally interconnected framework that has forcibly opened up national economies to such foreign influxes of human capital, governmental policies appear to be erecting higher and higher barriers around their territories (legally and physically!) to stop any more newcomers from coming in. In reality, the increasingly large and apparent concentrations of particular groups of immigrants in certain neighborhoods of European cities has been one of the key elements that served to trigger alarm, as both citizens and governments express concerns about the fact that such spatial aggregations are hampering immigrant integration into the rest of society (Massey and Fischer, 2000; Andersen, 2002; Musterd, 2003; Musterd & Murie, 2004).

1.1 Economic ('Market Exchange') Approach

The ongoing process of economic globalization is imposing several significant structural changes around the world, which carry important implications for the development of specific international labor migration patterns in Europe. To begin with, the convenient and protective manner in which globalization and the 'liberalization' of national economies is pursued today by most of the more prosperous countries in the world has contributed to widening the gap between the developed and the developing world in such a way that 'the rich get richer and the poor get poorer'. Unfortunately, it appears indeed that "in the global human condition, widening social cooperation and deepening inequality go together", as stated by Nederveen-Pieterse (2000, p.397). There is thus a clear-cut divide between those who 'have' and those who 'have-not', with the latter desperately seeking to belong to the former (Friedman, 2003).

Furthermore, nowadays, de-industrialization of national economies is advocated as a fundamental cornerstone for further economic development, and tertiarization has become one of the most prominent features of the global economy. In fact, besides a continuously shrinking agricultural sector in developed countries, their manufacturing industries now also generally tend to become less and less important in terms of employment and output, while their service sectors are constantly growing instead. This is part of a progressive shift around the world from 'industrial capitalism' to 'cognitive capitalism', which has also contributed to the rise of a more pronounced divide in the labor market between those who have access to technical knowledge and expertise – the 'skilled' – and those who are deprived of any valuable information and presumably possess nothing but physical strength and endurance – the 'unskilled' (Sassen, 1991; Ascher, 2001).

All in all, economic polarization seems to be intensifying between countries, but also within countries. In this respect, the neoclassical perspective – which sees international migration as the result of macro-economic wage differentials and the ensuing micro-economic calculations of single individuals of potential profits/costs associated with moving – and the new economics of migration – which have a similar focus but then with larger units (i.e. families/households) – still hold in that many people are indeed 'pushed' out of their countries in search of better living conditions (Goss and Lindquist, 1995). However, in view of the present situation described above, attention should primarily turn to the development of rather powerful 'pull factors' that are regulating international migration patterns instead.

Hence, the dual labor market theory becomes all the more salient, which stresses the idea that international migration takes place as a result of particular labor demands that are intrinsic to modern capitalistic societies (Massey et al., 1993, p.440). Portes (1995) and Sassen (1990; 1991) are some of the authors that have repeatedly laid emphasis on how modern capitalism produces specific economic structures that support occupational differentiation and polarization of the national labor force, which locate the immigrant labor force in specific, well overthought niches of the economy. Such segmentation of the labor market then promotes further 'dualization' of the economy as it is concentrating valuable 'skilled' personnel in stable and formal employment, while disposable 'unskilled' workers are increasingly confined to informal and insecure activities.

Needless to say, these kind of developments have had profound repercussions on the way in which receiving countries in the developed world tend to incorporate immigrant labor in their economies. In fact, the economic growth of the tertiary industry is simultaneously creating the demand for, on the one hand, an exclusive and increasingly specialized labor force, and on the other hand, a large and flexible pool of unqualified labor. However, due to commonly rising educational achievements and greater expectations/ambitions, in the developed world in particular, 'social labeling' of certain forms of employment has become all the more stringent and more and more people have started to avoid certain low-paid and low-status sectors of the economy. At this point, newly arrived immigrants from some of the poorest countries in the world, desperately in search of some form of income and generally more willing to accept harsher working conditions for lower pays, turn out to be a most handy source of labor to meet some of the heaviest and dirtiest demands of these so-called developed economies. As a result, several branches in Europe's national economies have now become not just 'immigrant jobs' in general, but they have actually been associated to very specific nationalities (van der Geest et al., 2004).

In reality, however, migration is an expensive and thus selective process, and it is a well known fact that most labor migrants are relatively well-educated and skilled, and generally belong to relatively high socio-economic strata in their respective countries of origin (Massey et al., 1993). In addition, especially for Europe, the present trend of the differentiation of migration also refers to the fact that more and more migrants are actually highly trained professionals as opposed to purely industrial workers (Castles and Miller, 1998). Unfortunately, it seems as if the distinction in the world system between the 'have' and the 'have-not' has all too often opportunely been used by developed countries to draw a parallel between those with skills and those without, thereby almost categorically classifying the overwhelming majority of immigrant labor forces from the developing world as part of the 'unskilled'. This explains why such a large proportion of immigrants in developed countries appear to be engaged in menial tasks that are far below their qualifications, which also offer them lower wages and less security than what the average national citizen enjoys.

As a result, "especially for those who are in the lower segments of the labor market, alternates in the housing market [are likely to] decline" (van Kempen & Ozuekren, 1998, p.1646). Not being able to afford much more, large concentrations of migrants are eventually compelled to live in the cheapest, most decadent houses, as well as the most downgraded areas of the city, thereby recollecting even more condescension from the rest of society. In fact, the level of the spatial integration of immigrants seems to be caught up in a vicious circle in which structurally-influenced differentiation infuses further individual discrimination (Massey and Fischer, 2000). All in all, "greater polarization means sharper segregation" (Musterd & Deurloo, 2002, p.489). Thus, generally speaking, the global economy – allowing (and sometimes actually demanding) a marginalized economic integration of immigrants – has ultimately led to an increasingly tangible trend of so-called "ghettoization" of immigrants in many cities of the developed world.

1.2 Political ('Welfare') Approach

With regard to the impact of welfare states on the housing situation of migrants, Musterd and Ostendorf (1998) and Esping-Andersen (1990) in particular have argued that stronger interventionist states are able to mitigate socio-economic polarization that might otherwise result from the ongoing processes of economic restructuring, in this manner also lessening the risk of actual spatial segregation. In other words, the focus of these authors lies on the institutional organization of a country and the effects that it has on the creation of a particular pattern of spatial integration, in as far as it decides on the distribution of welfare and social security benefits to immigrants. Hence, this perspective tends to stress the fact that western European welfare states, as opposed to the US for example, present lower levels of spatial segregation as their governments have preserved stronger roles as custodians and alleviators of society. What is more, especially the northern European welfare states – like the Netherlands and Sweden for example – have retained a remarkable influence on their heavily subsidized housing markets, thereby being able to allocate low-cost social housing to those most in need, pledging that low-income immigrant households are also given the opportunity to live in decent conditions (van Kempen & van Weesep, 1997; Musterd & Deurloo, 1998; Kesteloot & Cortie, 1998).

Growing numbers of migrants raise particular concerns for receiving societies in the developed world considering the fact that the present era is also typified by a general decline of the welfare state and a disempowerment of the nation-state in the face of economic globalization and liberalization (Mittelman, 2000), while large immigrant communities indeed require the receiving country to invest into their (spatial) integration, and to step up its role as a governmental guardian so as to be able to control it at the same time. Especially if these migrant networks facilitate the migratory process for those who follow as “former migrants [are able to] provide novices with valuable knowledge that permits cost-saving shortcuts” (Massey & García España, 1987, p.734), and are thus likely to lead to further immigration.

Indeed, even the stronger welfare states like the Netherlands and Sweden, for example, have not managed to remain impervious to the ongoing process of economic liberalization and globalization, and the general trend in Europe effectively appears to be that of declining welfare states, decentralizing their competences and responsibilities to lower tiers of governments or even to private actors, and, more worryingly, cutting more and more social funding. Overall, liberalization is coming along with fierce privatization, whereby in developed countries generally public social assistance and institutionalized support organs are slowly but surely reduced in size, funding and coverage. This way, a fundamental source of help and access to agencies of reference is denied to newly arriving immigrants that are trying to figure out how to settle. The specific economic developments in combination with the generalized decline of the welfare state that we are witnessing in the ‘developed’ world is thus not merely resulting in greater socio-economic polarization amongst citizens along the lines of occupational status, as is already showing at present (see Boelhouwer, 2006; Burgers and van der Lugt, 2006), but is also, eventually, likely to lead to greater spatial segregation according to an ethnically tint pattern.

Regardless of the fact that several theories actually underline the idea that immigration is not so much caused by specific push factors in the sending countries as it is by certain pull factors in the receiving countries, political and social opposition to immigration is rapidly growing in the developed world. Interestingly enough, the whole public discourse in the so-called 'developed' world surrounding the issue of immigration and integration is somewhat contradictory. On the one hand, a prevailing universalistic understanding of human rights is praising the values of equity, equal opportunity and freedom of expression, thus in fact calling for an inclusive and multicultural approach to immigration (Donnelly, 1999). On the other hand, despite the purportedly humanitarian ambitions of the developed countries in the West – and then especially since the infamous 9/11 on a global scale, and for us here in the Netherlands since the whole Theo van Gogh incident – there is definitely a visible rise of xenophobic expressions and discriminatory attitudes towards immigrant communities (Stolcke, 1999; Fekete, 2001). While disagreements between members of various communities in some of Europe's main urban areas are more and more frequently covered by media under headings of 'clashes of civilizations', there is a proliferation of (extreme) nationalistic parties to indicate how the popular voices for a more exclusive and imposing approach to immigration are growing stronger every day amongst its peoples.

As a matter of fact, the decline of the welfare state relates to another important issue in the political arenas of the developed countries that comes from hosting large immigrant communities, and that is the national definition of citizenship. What are the commonly agreed upon criteria that define who is a legitimate citizen and who is entitled to receive assistance and protection from the state? There is a general distinction between countries with a civic sense of national identity – based on *Ius Solis* (the Law of the Territory) – and those with an ethnically based conception of citizenship – based on *Ius Sanguinis* (the Law of Blood). These various kinds of regulations that apply in the different developed countries around the world partially reflect their historical pasts and the extent to which they are acquainted with the idea of being countries of immigration. Yet, nowadays, regardless of a nation's original definition of citizenship, all countries in the developed world are relentlessly imposing more and more restraining conditions for a successful granting of the necessary working and residence permits to migrants, and they are becoming all the more restrictive with regard to the actual naturalization of immigrants, especially in what they have come to call "Fortress Europe" (Albrecht, 2002; Boswell, 2003).

Nevertheless, looking at it from the 'other side of the telescope', it is indeed a misconception "that immigration rules and the way immigrants are dealt with will somehow be known and understood in the countries immigrants come from, and will be a 'deterrent'. [...] This assumption is hopelessly unrealistic. It trivializes the serious purpose of people who, in many cases, have no realistic means of making an income where they are." (Nicholson, 2002, p. 437) In fact, one of the main reasons that pushes people to move – the search for a better living – remains, especially at a time of deepening global inequalities. In reality, rather than diminishing the numbers of immigrants that cross the borders, restrictive immigration policies have served to cause a dramatic and structural increase in 'illegal' migration instead (Castles & Miller, 1998; King et al., 2003; Massey & Capoferro, 2004; Leerkes et al., 2006). Consequently, precisely as Burgers (1998, p.1865) says, undocumented migrants "not only feed on, but also contribute to the residential patterns of minority groups" in terms of housing opportunity and segregation – at this point, however, uncontrollably.

1.3 Social ('Network') Approach

As said by Bourdieu – the founding father of modern sociology – in *La Distinction* (1979), “to be is to be different”. Concordantly, Ascher (1995; 2005) claims that our present time is characterized by three socio-anthropological dynamics: individualization, rationalization, and social differentiation. Likewise, according to the Chicago School, city life could be described as a mosaic of little worlds that touch but do not necessarily interpenetrate as specific (subcultural) lifestyles have come to represent ‘a world within a world’. In fact, in what Bourdin (2005) likes to call the modern ‘city of consumption’, the multitude of choices that individuals face, which change according to their resources, create particular ‘profiles’ of life that are increasingly differentiated.

Yet, it is important to realize that the globalized process of (economically induced) differentiation also goes hand in hand with increased association between individuals with similar interests. “The more tradition loses its hold, and the more daily life is reconstituted in terms of the dialectical interplay of the local and the global, the more individuals are forced to negotiate lifestyle choices among the diversity of options” (Giddens, 1991, p.5) On the one hand, globalization is deemed to act as a culturally homogenizing force, but it is, on the other hand, also offering a larger range of choices to people, encouraging greater specializations as the choices people make depend on a larger number of interactions. Hence, while the current patterns of consumption contribute to an individualization of experiences, it assures the subsequent socialization of people as well by creating common points of reference and so-called ‘images of collectivity’ (Bourdin, 2005).

As Milton M. Gordon explains, a subcultural lifestyle is “a sub-division of a national culture, composed of a combination of factorable social situations, [...], but forming in their combination a functioning unity which has an integrated impact on the participating individual” (Gordon, 1947, p. 41). Personal taste, then, (also with regard to housing) develops within an interactive and contextualized form of rationality as various kinds of meaning are attributed to objects, events and relationships by different people. Thus, from this perspective, adopting a certain type of lifestyle also entails compliance with a specific set of cultural practices, preferences, and value orientations that are shared by a rather homogenous group of people (Bourdieu, 1979).

All in all, individuals today appear to belong to multiple social settings which are no longer necessarily interrelated (i.e. work, leisure, family, etc.) – as a result they have generally become more flexible ‘pluri-socials’ (Ascher, 2001; Bourdin, 2005). In this respect, migrants in particular are prone to be even more ‘distinct’ and ‘pluri-social’ simply in view of the fact that current communication technologies allow for immigrants to keep in touch with their friends and families back in their home country. Emigrating does not mean cutting all ties with their homeland anymore. Whether one has the intention of returning back to his country of origin in the long run or not, nowadays one can easily be part of social networks in several countries at the same time – be a so-called ‘transnational’ citizen. Thus, their particular practices, values, and choices – also with respect to housing – are the outcome of individual socialization processes and specific forms of ‘social capital’ (Portes, 1998).

In Europe, since the emergence of various large immigrant communities happens to occur at the same time that unemployment rates are rising and welfare benefits are being curtailed, many people were led to believe immigrants are the root of all problems. Generally, not being able to see any of the macro-economic, structural dynamics that are truly at play, the public's desperate need for a scapegoat rapidly ends up pointing the finger at the visible 'evil foreign invaders': 'more and more of *them* are coming', 'taking *our* jobs', and 'living of *our* welfare'. Additionally, transnationalism seems to be turning into a controversial issue in many receiving societies because people fear it may lead to a reduced desire and willingness on behalf of the immigrants to become fully integrated citizens in terms of respecting right and duties in the hosting country (Faist, 2000).

What these common positional statements show is that, while immigration puts the notion of citizenship into discussion in the political arena, it also brings the whole issue of (national) identity to the forefront in society (see Shanahan, 1999). Ultimately, it launches the debate around the definition of 'Us' against 'The Other'. A noticeable upsurge of right wing parties in European politics and the growing incidences of 'racialized' social disruption in many countries both indicate in their own way the extent to which people at present tend to adopt a rather narrow view of the 'Us' category as they are feeling threatened by any more new-coming 'Others'. In effect, whether a country defines citizenship according to civic participation or along ethnic lines of belonging, the inescapable globalized media of today have managed to turn ethnicity into an incredibly 'hot topic' of controversy in a large number of countries that constitute this so-called 'developed world'. Moreover, the present trend of criminalization of international migration is fuelling a negative mediatization of immigrant communities even further.

Constant confrontation with different (cultural) identities eventually forces people – consciously and/or unconsciously – into better defining their own identity by setting more and more delimitations compared to 'Others' (Friedman, 1994; Rose, 1995). Seemingly rigid constructions of mental categories are then, in effect, commonly translated into territorial disputes over specific demarcations of the respective physical frontiers (Harvey, 1996). All too often, these societal 'categorizations' seem to promote considerable 'ethnic clustering' along certain common imaginary – yet strongly perceived and concretely operational – boundaries (see for example Kakar, 1996). This, in turn, further discourages frequent interaction between various communities both in the private and in the public sphere. Not surprisingly, physical segregation of the 'stranger within' (see Simmel, 1950) appears to become all the more acutely visible in the 'developed' countries.

2. SPATIAL INTEGRATION OF IMMIGRANTS IN SOUTHERN EUROPE

Until the 70s, the relatively poorer Mediterranean countries of Europe – Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece – used to be prime suppliers of (industrial) labor for the richer Northern countries of the EU, like the UK, France, or the Netherlands. However, since they joined the EU in the 80s, economic development of Southern European countries took off and finally allowed them to enjoy greater welfare, whereby its people were no longer forced to emigrate in mass to other countries to be able to make a decent living. Instead, rising levels of prosperity in Southern Europe managed to turn it into an increasingly attractive destination for migrants from an extensive range of (developing) countries. At the moment, in terms of their residential geography, immigrants are still living fairly mixed amongst the native population, whereby cities in Southern Europe hitherto appear not present visible patterns of spatial segregation of immigrants to the same extent that Western European countries do (Malheiros, 2002). Nevertheless, that Southern European countries have lower levels of spatial segregation is not so surprising considering the fact that they have only started receiving large amounts of immigrants much later. Hence, that they have a greater degree of spatial mix compared to western European countries at this point in time does not mean they are not well on their ways towards worsening scenarios.

2.1 Economic ('Market Exchange') Approach

In reality, global dynamics appear to have managed to create a peculiar economic context in Southern Europe, which, in turn, is likely to have severe implications for the spatial integration of immigrants in the Mediterranean in the future (Leontidou, 1990; 1993). Quiet alarmingly, Southern European countries seem to amplify many of the general trends that are contributing to a deterioration of the spatial marginalization of immigrants in the developed world. As a matter of fact, according to Malheiros, "the problem is not so much segregation in itself, but the coexistence of several negative elements in the areas where immigrants cluster: deprived housing and poor public space, over-representation of social problems, [...], as well as reduced economic dynamics" (2002, p.108).

King and Rybaczuk (1993) and Reyneri (2001, 2003) have highlighted the fact that it is a particular economic formation in Southern Europe that is actually 'pulling' immigration to the countries more than anything else. Southern Europe is indeed complying with the process of intense tertiarization of the economy and the (gendered) differentiation of the labor market of the global economy, whereby it is also subjected to the general trend of the feminization of immigration (Lazaridis & Anthias, 2000). However, the Southern European economies have relatively high proportions of small-scale enterprises, which are particularly vulnerable in this age of economic restructuring and are often only able to survive by operating in an informal manner so as to avoid paying extra taxes and contributions. Hence, Mediterranean countries present an outstanding complication – a far more ingrained 'dual' economy than other developed countries (Mingione, 1995; Baldwin-Edwards, 2005).

Although the estimates vary, it is essentially an irrefutable reality that the underground economies³ of Southern European countries are larger than those of other European countries. Subsequently, according to Reyneri (2001), despite high unemployment rates in Southern European countries, immigrants do not represent serious competition for the natives' opportunities on the formal job market as a large majority of immigrants occupies the low-level and precarious vacancies produced by an actively thriving underground economy, which are scorned by the locals. He therefore speaks about replacement and complementarity of immigrant labor forces in the receiving labor markets instead, which appears to be even more evident for the specific case of Greece (Reyneri, 2003, pp.11). Yet, he also highlights the idea that "the underground economy has important negative effects on migrants' insertion" (Reyneri, 2003, p.3) as unauthorized immigrant workers are bound to make lesser incomes, enjoy lesser insurances, and be more vulnerable to exploitation in the informal economy.

King also reminds us of the fact that "the [present] transition to post-Fordism raises the general question as to whether Southern Europe was ever 'Fordist' in the first place". Similarly, Mingione's (1995) model on 'late developers' of European capitalism suggests the Mediterranean is still pursuing its path to modernization. Thus, Ribas-Mateos correctly

³ This research takes on Reyneri's definition of the term 'underground economy', i.e. "all income-earning activities that are not regulated by state in social environments where similar activities are regulated" (Reyneri, 2003, p.12), and does therefore not necessarily denote a criminal circuit.

points out that “flexibility, the epitome of Fordist-Keynesianism, combines well with [current] Southern European structures” (Ribas-Mateos, 2004, p.1057), especially given that these are countries where agriculture and tourism are significant contributors to national GDPs, which are also rather precarious industries that contain clear demarcations of stable versus uncertain functions, and formal versus informal employment opportunities.

However, native Southern Europeans show not to be prepared to be so ‘flexible’ in their choice of employment anymore as they are moving out of the rural areas into the cities and reaching higher educational levels, aspiring to obtain ‘decent’ jobs. Therefore, not being able to find the necessary labor force amongst the local population, one way for Southern European economies to remain competitive in the global economy was to hire immigrant workers who were willing to work for low salaries in low-status industries (Corkill, 2001; Polavieja, 2005). Accordingly, King’s ‘Southern European model’ of immigration stresses the fact that immigrants in the Mediterranean are located in specific segments of the labor market (i.e. agriculture, construction, the industrial sector, tourism and catering, street-hawkers, and domestic services), doing marginal jobs that lead to exploitation and social exclusion (King et al., 2000). What is more, specific nationalities as well as gender are put into association with each of these various segments of the labor market (i.e. Filipino women in domestic services, Indian men in agriculture, Polish men in construction, etc.) (King et al., 2000; Lazaridis & Anthias, 2000).

Overall, Southern European countries, even more so than any of the other developed countries, seem to have created a vital and structural demand for cheap and flexible immigrant labor, which ends up positioning immigrants in particularly marginalized and informalized sectors of the economy (Baldwin-Edwards and Arango, 1999; Quassoli, 1999; Reyneri 2001). In fact, “informal work and regular or irregular status interweave to create a wide variety of combinations mirrored in diverse forms of social insertion or marginalization and discrimination” (Mingione, 1999, p.210).

As a result, immigrants in Mediterranean Europe who are basically forced into earning unstable, below average incomes are not given the opportunity to enjoy much freedom of choice on the predominantly private housing markets in these countries. Instead, immigrants often have no choice but to settle for some of the cheapest, usually most degenerate housing. Such clustering, in turn, all too often encourages further social stigmatization of immigrant communities, and is thereby in all likelihood going to exacerbate the problem of spatial segregation of immigrants in Southern European countries.

2.2 Political ('Welfare') Approach

According to Ferrera (1996), low coverage of the population, high differentiation of benefits, underdeveloped unemployment benefits, and inadequate universalistic national systems are some of the traits shared by all Southern European welfare systems. Matsaganis (2000) also stresses the absence of a national minimum social safety net as one of the defining features of Southern European welfare states in particular. Hence, as the Mediterranean never really had the opportunity to develop effective and stable welfare systems, people learnt to rely on informal networks of friends and family for assistance and support more than they did on the state, which explains why these bonds are generally still much stronger and decisive in Southern European states today than they are in any other parts of the EU.

If welfare states in the Mediterranean are already unable to provide for their own citizens, they seem to be even less prepared to deal with the arrival of large waves of immigrants these last couple of decades. So far, the laws regulating entry, control and integration of immigrants still differ from country to country in Southern Europe, as in practice there is not yet a common European legislation covering this field. Nonetheless, it is fair to state that until recently, overall, the actual integration of immigrants into society has not so much been the focus of the existing laws in Southern Europe as much as the intent to control the wave of migration at the borders (Jordan et al., 2003b). In fact, according to Solé (2004, p.1212), "we can broadly state that when non-EU immigrants attempt to enter local [Southern] European societies, they are given an unfavorable reception". On the whole, the institutionalized assistance offered to immigrants for a complete integration in Southern Europe is generally minimal, if not non-existent – especially in Italy, Greece and Portugal, with the exception of Spain perhaps. For example, although perhaps growing in number today, there are still relatively few associations that are directly and efficiently helping the immigrants to overcome any difficulties they may encounter whilst trying to set up a new life in an unknown country (Fonseca et al., 2002; Antoniou, 2003).

In reality, providing that bare minimum of social assistance to immigrants that is available is even more complicated of an issue to deal with in Southern Europe countries as their endless coastlines and mountainous borders are hard to patrol, and they are confronted with exceptionally large amounts of irregular immigrants, of whom national governments have no records whatsoever. Besides, at present the entrenched dual labor market system is reproducing a dual welfare system since the welfare services are dependent on workers' contributions, which can only be registered for formal employment of course (Ribas-Mateos, 2004, p.1051). Considering the sizes of the informal economies in Southern European countries and the proportions of (undocumented) immigrant labor that they employ, large numbers of immigrant workers are automatically denied access to any form of social security.

Furthermore, the housing markets in Southern European countries are characterized by fairly high proportions of private home-ownership, while low-cost subsidized housing provided for and maintained by the state is not, by far, that common in the Mediterranean countries as is in some other Western European countries (Allen et al., 2004). Interestingly, with regard to the (inexistence of) social housing policies in Mediterranean countries, Ribas-

Mateos (2004) highlights the fact that it is “the relative laxness of urban regulations and the late development of urban planning processes [that] have contributed to limit social and ethnic clustering” (2004, p.1049). However, while, on the one hand, the absence of social housing schemes perhaps avoided the clustering of low-income immigrants in certain neighborhoods with low-cost rented dwellings, on the other hand – also as a result of the fact that most houses are privately owned – the housing market came to be regulated through informal networks, and “a culture of non-regulation developed [...] especially where market demand was dynamic” (Malheiros, 2002, p. 115).

Additionally, Jordan et al. (2003b) emphasize how the recent attempt at managing the labor market in the EU with a ‘co-ordinated immigration policy’ in effect served to place the control of immigrants in the hands of public administrators and welfare employees – the so-called ‘street-level bureaucrats’. These latter are “public workers who interact directly with citizens in the course of their jobs and have varying degrees of discretion in the execution of their tasks” (Jordan et al., 2003b, p.213) – they therefore play a fundamental role in the approach to immigration as they come to represent a specific organizational culture that contextualizes the implementation of immigration policies according to local interpretations. In this respect, due to the fairly recent upsurge of immigration in the Mediterranean countries, Southern European welfare officials are still struggling to get accustomed to their changing roles. Regrettably, in Southern European countries, fear of the unknown seems to prevail amongst many public workers, whom have all too often been witnessed to be instigating a discriminatory discourse that hampers the formal integration of (specific) foreign communities and lacks the willingness to assist foreigners to settle down in their country (Triandafyllidou, 2000a; Jordan et al., 2003a).

All together, as the welfare state in Southern Europe does not sufficiently intervene to guarantee decent and affordable housing for incoming immigrants, and, at the same time, the political discourse around their arrival seems to remain unfavorable, immigrants are frequently left to struggle on their own with a marginal bargaining power on a rather competitive housing market. In view of the inadequate political support – in general social assistance as well as in housing in specific – that is provided to immigrants in the Mediterranean, and their commonly marginalized economic situation described earlier, immigrants risk not to have any other option but to accept the disdained oddments left vacant by the rest of society.

2.3 Social ('-Network') Approach

Triandafyllidou's (2000a) investigations into the political discourse surrounding immigrants in the Mediterranean revealed that their presence in practice activated a process of re-defining national identity along exclusionary lines, which could be detected from widespread utterances of so-called 'subtle' racism (e.g. "We are not racists, its job insecurity that leads to racism") (Triandafyllidou, 2000a, p. 383). Nevertheless, the rise of violent encounters and the persistent criminalization, by the media naturally but even by police forces and state officials, of certain groups of immigrants in Southern Europe (especially of Moroccans in Spain and of Albanians in Italy and Greece), indicate this form of racism in Southern European societies is not so 'subtle' after all (Baldwin-Edwards, 2001a; Mai, 2005).

Also, the stigmatization of immigrants in Southern Europe is encouraged by a frenetic kind of media coverage that appears to focus primarily on the illegality of the newly arrived immigrants and the disproportionately high rates of criminality that allegedly ensued upon their arrival (Mai, 2005). In reality, the illegal status of large numbers of immigrants in Southern Europe has simply turned them into defenseless scapegoats that can easily be accused of being the cause of many other (often long pre-existing!) societal problems.

In practice, although natives and immigrants may at the moment still be sharing the same neighborhoods in Southern European cities, they still show an increasingly perceptible tendency not to make the same use of social spaces, nor to share the same social networks (Galanakis, 2004; Mudu, 2006). Due to the fact that the people in Southern European countries are able and accustomed to spend much of their time living their lives outside of the enclosed domestic walls, the progressive 'appropriation' of public spaces by certain ethnic groups that is currently occurring in Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, and Greek cities, becomes a particularly noticeable and contested issue for the native residents of Southern European cities in a growing number of occasions (Gaspar et al., 1998; Galanakis, 2004; Ramírez Goicoechea, 2005; Mudu, 2006; Díaz Orueta, 2007). Considering the definition of public space that claims it is "the common ground where people carry out functional and ritual activities giving a sense of community" (Galanakis, 2004, p.4), the differing usages of separate public spaces by natives and immigrants in urban centers of Southern Europe indicate an obstructed perception of 'the other' that impedes mutual acquaintance and interaction.

Yet, especially because of the fact that in Southern European countries informal social networks are in charge of the housing market, it is crucial for immigrants to have the right local connections and know the way things work to be able to obtain a decent residence. As a matter of fact, since there is no state to rely on, the significance of social capital for the level of spatial integration of immigrants becomes all the more prominent in Southern Europe. However, frequent and extreme stigmatization of immigrants amongst Southern Europeans makes it very difficult for migrants to overcome pejorative stereotypes and engage in stable and reliable inter-ethnic relationships. As a result, it is not uncommon for migrants to face recurrent discrimination in the privately-owned housing market (amongst other things). Hence, disturbingly, the social dynamics presently at play are also expected to intensify the degree of spatial disintegration in Southern Europe in the future.

3. SPATIAL INTEGRATION OF IMMIGRANTS IN GREECE

As has already been mentioned before, the proportions of immigrants in Greece with respect to the total population of the country are simply enormous compared to other Southern European countries. Moreover, Cavounidis (2002) stresses that Greece is different than the rest of Mediterranean countries because of the role of former communist countries in feeding these migratory flows, the proximity of the major source countries, and the dominance of a single source country (i.e Albanians). The existing accounts on spatial integration patterns of immigrants in Greece claim that immigrants at this stage are still spatially mixed amongst the native population, although they recognize the fact that immigrants' housing conditions tend to be rather poor (Iosifides & King, 1998; Kassimati, 2001). Still, if global dynamics already succeeded in creating a perilous context in Southern Europe as a whole for the occurrence of a positive pattern of spatial integration of migrants, they appear to do so even more in Greece (Leontidou, 1995).

3.1 Economic ('Market Exchange') Approach

What is so remarkable about Greece is that it has high employment rates amongst its immigrants while it retains high unemployment rates amongst its native population (Baldwin-Edwards and Safilios-Rothschild, 1999). As a matter of fact, all together, immigrants are deemed to represent as much as 12% of the total labor force! Accordingly, many authors have stressed the vitality of the immigrant labor force for the survival and competitiveness of the Greek economy (Baldwin-Edwards, 2004; Hatziprokopiou, 2004; Labrianidis et al., 2004; Sarris & Zografakis, 1999), especially in the rural areas that are suffering from out-migration of local labor forces to the cities (Kasimis & Papadopoulos, 2005). Nevertheless, existing research has also shown that immigrants in Greece are set to earn less than the average Greek worker (Lianos et al., 1996; Baldwin-Edwards, 2002). In fact, Greece's economy – patently caught up in the neoliberal framework – responded to global dynamics by developing its own peculiar structure compared to other European countries – one that might actually turn out to be particularly hazardous for a constructive integration of immigrants in the labor market in the future.

At present, for a large share Greece's economy is still composed of small-scale, family-based enterprises, and it retains a fairly large agricultural sector. Furthermore, until this day, Greece has always presented high figures of self-employed and family-workers amongst its workforce compared to the average trend of the other European countries. However, it appears that "this long-standing 'divergent' feature of Greek society is in the process of transformation [as] the proportion of employed population in Greece who are in waged employment has increased greatly since the late 1980s" (Cavounidis, 2006, pp. 643): 63,4% of the employed population were salaried 'employees' in 2004, compared to only 49,3% in 1986, the 'employers' or 'self-employed' decreased from 35,3% in 1986 to 30,2% in 2004, and the 'family-workers' declined from 15,4% in 1986 to 6,4% in 2004. Part of this shift can be explained by the fact that more and more work that was formerly carried out by family members is now assigned to immigrants in Greece, especially in agriculture, but also in the more private sphere of domestic and care work (i.e. taking care of children, elderly, household chores, etc.). Such structural changes of the Greek labor market have not only provided the opportunity for increased participation in the local economy by native females, but have also supported a growing feminization of migration to Greece.

In reality, Greece's economy too is going through an intense tertiarization process – one that helps to cause an increasingly pronounced differentiation between the specific functions reserved for skilled, and those for unskilled labor forces (Maloutas and Karadimitriou, 2001). These differentiations are particularly prominent in seasonal industries, such as the agricultural sector and the tourism business – which also happen to be two significant contributors to the GDP of Greece, and thus major managers of the national labor force. Yet, these sectors simply cannot fill their vacancies with local labor forces, chiefly due to the fact that Greek youngsters with rising educational qualifications now aim to get better qualified jobs, to the point that they often prefer to remain unemployed (and live of family support) rather than to even think about taking up any low-status employment. In point of fact, especially for the survival of many agricultural enterprises in the rural areas of Greece, the presence of the immigrant labor force is an absolute necessity, because Greek youth increasingly aspires to move out of the

'backwardness' of the rural villages, into the main urban centers in search of skillful professions instead. Hence, immigrant labor forces that are willing to take up any form of employment just to make some money are a useful asset to be able to meet the specific demands for low-cost, hard-working, and temporary forces in the Greek labor market. As a result, many Albanian immigrants – who often actually possess high educational qualifications (Rhode, 1993) – end up employed in specific low-status and precarious industries (domestic services, construction, tourism and agriculture), generally working longer hours and earning only a fourth, sometimes even only half, of what a Greek person doing the exact same job would earn (Lianos et al., 1996, Baldwin-Edwards, 2002).

An even more significant complication for a successful economic integration of migrants is the fact that a significant number amongst them ends up taking on unprotected forms of employment in the informal economy. In fact, one of the most problematic features of Greece's economy is that the statistical estimates on the size of its informal economy range between 30 and 45 per cent of the national GDP, which is larger than for any other Southern European country! Due to formal labor market rigidities (i.e. large compulsory social insurance benefits must be paid by the employers for each of their employees) and the endangered survival of small-scale businesses in an increasingly competitive and liberalized world, the particular structure of the Greek economy has not only been allowing for, but in effect actually been encouraging a particularly dynamic underground economy, whose continuous flourishing is made possible by the fact that Greece's public administration system is renowned for its weaknesses and its inability to control the operations of all of the smaller firms (Baldwin-Edwards and Arango, 1999; Fakiolas, 1999; Sarris & Zografakis, 1999). In the underground economy, unauthorized employees obviously do not benefit from any guarantees of minimum wages or of stability of employment. What is more, the lack of inspections jeopardizes the safety of the working conditions and all too often appears to allow for exploitation of the labor force to take place.

Immigrants in Greece thus face a double constraint while attempting to reach successful economic integration: distinctive occupational segmentation of the labor market and fierce dualization of the economy both serve to raise the chances that immigrant labor forces are located in the least desirable, toughest, most precarious, and worst paid positions. For a newly arriving immigrant that does not have the necessary connections or (political) support, it is extremely hard to surpass these conceivably stereotypical allocations that are nonetheless commonly upheld. In view of the fact that, on the face of it, the Greek government is not doing much to take charge over the course of these particular developments, incoming migrants today greatly risk to find themselves in particularly vulnerable financial circumstances. This, in turn, will unavoidably restrain their ability to afford decent conditions on a private housing market.

3.2 Political ('Welfare') Approach

Overall, it appears that Greek immigration policy has always been “fundamentally exclusionary, with no evaluation of labor market needs and no realistic possibility of legal immigration from Balkan countries” (Baldwin-Edwards, 2004, p.5). In fact, of all Southern European countries, Greece seems to be the most reluctant to deal with the presence of (illegal) immigrants (Kanellopoulos et al., 2005). Instead, they have frequently chosen to opt for intense border surveillance and drastic ‘sweeping-operations’ that ended up in massive deportations, but have also helped to raise xenophobic attitudes amongst its people towards these ‘intruders’ (Fakiolas, 2003a).

Although Greece is estimated to have the highest proportion of undocumented migrants of all Southern European countries, it has only implemented two regularization programmes until this day. The first one, in 1998, has often been described as a huge failure to be blamed on the excessive amount of documentation that immigrants had to provide for, on the complex bureaucratic procedures, and on the ensuing administrative disorganization (Lazaridis & Poyago-Theotoky, 1999; Skordas, 2002). Furthermore, a differential treatment was applied to Ethnic Greeks (Pontic Greeks and Vorioepiotes), but the Greek government never thought it was necessary to actually keep record of the passports and permits issued to this particular type of migrants. Therefore, it is not possible to draw precise conclusions on the effective rate of naturalization of immigrants in Greece.

Of the second regularization scheme in 2001 – for which the application process had been decentralized to local municipalities in an attempt to make it more efficient and less chaotic – the outcome is still unclear as Greece is running rather slow in setting up appropriate and accurate statistical databases, or it is simply not always willing to share the information that it has (Baldwin-Edwards & Kyriakou, 2004). Besides, one must bear in mind that “despite the professed aim of the policy to help immigrants to ‘stay legal’, the high fees and costs of the regularization may [have induced] them to prefer the risks of illegality rather than assume the cost of regularization and the risk of non-regularization at the end of the process” (Fakiolas, 2003a, p. 545). Hence, overall, Greece remains having to cope with an ever growing number of illegal migrants (Lianos, 2001, Fakiolas, 2003b).

Ferrera (1996) already highlighted the insufficiency of basic social assistance as one of the essential traits of the weak welfare states in the Mediterranean earlier on. Matsaganis (2000) and Papadopoulos (2006) confirm this particularly undeveloped nature of the Greek welfare state by emphasizing the bureaucratic ineptitude and the deficiency of state funding. In reality, considering that many (undocumented) immigrants in Greece are employed in the informal economy, they are not even eligible to be covered by any form of social security anyway, since that is only and exclusively given to those who have paid a certain amount of contributions (which in Greece are referred to as ‘social stamps’).

On top of the general precariousness of Greek social benefits⁴, an even more remarkable feature of the political organization of Greece is the fact that it is the only country in the European Union that has not effectively implemented apposite housing

⁴ See for example the ‘Country Report’ by OECD (2004) for further detail on existing social assistance schemes in Greece.

schemes for the most vulnerable segments of society (Allen et al., 2004). As a matter of fact, as far as social housing, a public rental sector does not exist in Greece (Sak & Raponi, 2002). At the moment, about 75% of the housing market in Greece is owner-occupied, and another 20% is privately rented. Instead, there is no publicly owned dwelling stock, neither by central government nor by local authorities. The only organization that provides some form of assistance in housing is the centrally regulated Workers Housing Organization (OEK), which generally opts to build dwellings to then sell for particularly low prices (= ca. 2/5 of their normal commercial value on the market), rather than granting rental subsidies.⁵ However, any kind of housing benefits are purely restricted to (un)employed workers, who must also meet an extensive list of additional requirements.

Additionally, the integrative process of immigrants in Greece faces a noteworthy constraint when it comes to applying for permits and citizenship: they must endure the discriminatory organizational culture and the corrupted work values of Greek welfare officers at various levels of government (Psimmenos & Kassimati, 2003), and a predominantly nationalistic approach to immigration (Triandafyllidou, 2000a). Such attitudes are especially tangible towards Albanian immigrants:

“They are people who are poor, they come here, don’t pay their insurance, steal and get involved with criminal activities...we are not a multicultural society, the Americans want us to become like them...”

(IKA officer qtd. in Psimmenos & Kassimati, 2003, p. 354)

If this is indeed how welfare officials feel, foreign immigrants are not likely to be granted the appropriate political rights and social security that are necessary in order to be able to pursue formal economic integration and stability.

Moreover, Ribas-Mateos (2004) stresses the fact that in Greece, as opposed to the Catholic Church who provided social assistance and thus managed to replace the lack of the welfare state to some extent, the Orthodox Church never fulfilled such an important role in charity. Consequently, on the whole, perhaps even more so in Greece than in the other catholic Southern European countries (such as Italy for example where many migrant assistance schemes are initiated by religious institutions), immigrants really do not have many public organizations to turn to for help.

On the whole, it seems the political attitude towards immigrants in Greece is mainly serving to further extend their (economic) marginalization in society. In view of the fact that almost the entire housing market in Greece is privately owned, the lack of institutionalized assistance causes their generally meager bargaining power to become even more trivial in a competitive (and discriminatory) housing market. As a result, for certain immigrant communities – the Roma most notably – the housing situation is so bad that Greece even managed to obtain the ‘Housing Rights Violator Award’ in 2006 from the Geneva-based Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions!⁶

⁵ See The European Liaison Committee for Social Housing [CECODHAS], (2007), *Social Housing in Greece: Fact File*, available online at <<http://www.cecodhas.org/images/stories/CountryStat/greecestatpdf.pdf>>

⁶ For further information please see the media release ‘Violator Award - Greece’ published on the website of the *Centre on Housing Right and Evictions*, <http://www.cohre.org/view_page.php?page_id=237>.

3.3 Social ('-Network') Approach

In Greece, the discriminatory practices that have been witnessed in the administrative organization towards immigrants can also reoccurringly be detected in society at large (Pavlou, 2007). In fact, the 'Us' in Greece tends to be a well-defined group of ethnically and culturally homogenous people, who even apply a strict hierarchy of 'Greekness', which distinguishes 'real' Greeks from 'second-class' Greeks (the Pontic Greeks), 'third-class' Greeks (the Vorioepirotas), and at the very bottom 'the Others' (Lazaridis & Wickens, 1999). With such relatively well defined hierarchical notions, not too surprisingly, intolerance and the 'criminalization' of 'foreign' immigrants – and then especially of Albanians – is pervasively strengthening amongst the Greek population (Triandafyllidou, 2000b; Hatziprokopiou, 2003; Psimmenos & Kassimati, 2003; Elafros, 2004). There is even a specific term for it now: 'Albanophobia'.

Albanophobia refers to the fact that, amongst a significant number of Greek people, Albanians are almost immediately labeled as 'untrustworthy', 'barbaric', and 'criminal' (Karydis, 1992). In other words, Greek people's idea of Albanians is all too often that they are fine for doing the dirty work (it is even considered a status symbol to have a foreign maid for example), but they are not fine to socialize with in their private spheres. Curiously enough, considering that a large amount of Albanian immigrants in Greece are indeed intending to stay there, some even opt to change their names into Greek ones, and baptize their children according to the Orthodox tradition, all in order to gain more acceptance in society (Lazaridis & Wickens, 1999). Yet, despite the fact that Albanian children appear to be fairly well integrated into the Greek educational system, overall, ingrained prejudice of the Greek population towards Albanians seems to continue to hamper much constructive social networking between the two communities (Dimakos & Tasiopoulou, 2003; Lawrence, 2005).

The intense 'mediation' of the alleged criminality of Albanians is not exactly helping the eradication of these xenophobic attitudes in Greek society either (Mai, 2005). Not surprisingly, Greeks and (Albanian) immigrants have been witnessed to make use of separate spaces in differing ways (Iosifides and King, 1998; Fakiolas, 1999; Kassimati, 2001; Hatziprokopiou, 2004). Certain areas in Athens especially have undergone significant changes over the past decade as growing numbers of immigrants gradually 'appropriated' themselves of public spaces for a changing variety of purposes – as happened with Omonoia Square for example in downtown Athens, very well illustrated by Galanakis (2004). The media always make sure to report on any kinds of criminal activities that may (or may not!) be taking place in these kinds of areas, largely neglecting the pragmatic difficulties of integration for immigrants and the positive aspects of their presence in Greece.

Taking into account that the private housing market in Greece is mainly regulated through informal networks, discriminatory attitudes in society have severe repercussions for immigrants' access to housing. In fact, sometimes the signs can be quite explicit, as for example when it says: 'For rent: No Albanians!' (Baldwin-Edwards, 2004). In other occasions, immigrants are forced to pay disproportionately high rent for housing that is poorly maintained and ill-equipped (Hatziprokopiou, 2003). All in all, positive spatial integration of immigrants appears to be likely to be hindered by the poor and prejudiced image of the (Albanian) immigrant that Greek people tend to have.

PART III: 'IN PRACTICE'

“Firstly, there is now a widespread understanding that explicit theorizing produces better quality research outcomes. In particular, it provides the basis for a clear framework that enables the reader to scrutinize research on its own terms and avoid ambiguity. Secondly, there is an appreciation that housing research cannot be undertaken successfully in isolation from wider debates taking place in other social science disciplines [...].”

(Jacobs et al., 2004, p.2)

CONCEPTUAL MODEL

FACTORS AFFECTING IMMIGRANT HOUSING PATTERNS:		
ECONOMIC (→ Bargaining Power)	POLITICAL (→ Legal Assistance)	SOCIAL (→ Contacts)

S C A L E of A N A L Y S I S	MICRO	Position in Labour Market	Permits & Rights	Networks	
		Structure of Local Economy	Competences of Local Institutions		
	MACRO	Segmentation of the Labour Force	Dualization of the Economy	Immigration Law	Welfare
		Global Economic Restructuring	Citizenship		

A CONCEPTUAL MODEL...

The conceptual model on p.41 is, so to say, the skeleton of this entire case-study – it represents the ensemble of (separate yet interactive) components that this research considers in terms of the impact they may (or may not!) have on the housing situation of Albanian immigrants in Zakynthos Town. Following the theoretical framework, which was split in 3 separate approaches – ‘in appreciation [for the fact] that housing research cannot be undertaken successfully in isolation from wider debates taking place in other social science disciplines’ (*quote by Jacobs et al. on p.39*) – the conceptual model that guides the understanding of Albanian housing patterns in Zakynthos Town upholds the same analytical distinction between economic, political, and social dimensions. Moreover, the differentiation between micro- and macro-analytical scales of investigation serves to reflect how this research attempts to look at local dynamics from an integrated perspective.

The economic ‘market exchange’ approach that was applied to various regional scales throughout the previous chapter showed how global economic restructuring is currently having profound repercussions for the countries of the ‘developed’ world, and then particularly for Southern Europe, generally encouraging sharper segmentation of the labor force as well as greater dualization of their economies. In order to comprehend and contextualize the positions in the Zakynthian labor market that are filled by migrant workers, in particular by Albanians, the conceptual model also indicates that this research sets out to discover how the local economy on Zakynthos is concretely affected and shaped by these larger structural forces. Awareness of the forms of employment taken on by Albanians is, in effect, a prerequisite to be able to understand the extent of their individual financial bargaining power with respect to housing, which is ultimately the question at stake.

Instead, the political ‘welfare’ approach stressed the fact that the general decline of the welfare state (or the absence hereof in Southern Europe) and the increasingly restrictive immigration policies in the ‘developed’ world are both serving to place the entire notion of citizenship in a highly contested debate. It is therefore important to look at the way Zakynthian institutions have responded to relevant national and international political discourses as far as the local implementation of immigration laws and execution of public assistance schemes. Hence, to be able to understand the extent of legal assistance that migrants may encounter during their process of integration, and then with respect to housing arrangements in particular, it is necessary to evaluate the actual permits and rights of Albanian migrants on Zakynthos.

Finally, the social 'network' approach underlined the significance of individual (cultural) preferences and forms of social capital for a comprehensive understanding of the residential patterns of migrants. The conceptual model shows how during this research the main focus of investigation for this analytical dimension is to recognize the helpful and informative social networks of Albanian migrants in Zakynthos Town in an attempt to recognize the supportive mechanisms on which they rely in their quest for a decent accommodation. In reality, the theoretical framework also suggested the contours of these interactive relationships are conditioned by other collective social phenomena – most notably xenophobia and transnationalism – to which reference shall therefore be made in as much as they relate to the establishment (or not) of constructive networks.

...TO FORMULATE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Dealing with a topic that is overlapping so many different disciplines and is related to so many 'theories', I must say I found it particularly hard to summarize it all in just a few words and place these in a table of coordinated boxes to compose a so-called 'conceptual model'! Notwithstanding, as mentioned on p.39 by Jacobs et al. (2004), 'explicit theorizing' is certainly a crucial element for the logical and practical implementation of any research. Not only it clarifies the perspective and the scope of the research to the reader by listing all the relevant variables, but it also allows the researcher to deduct a coherent set of operational research questions that rest on sound theoretical assumptions.

Considering the aim of this research – to study the way Albanians perceive their housing situation in Zakynthos Town in view of their specific economic, political and social circumstances on Zakynthos – the research questions are both of descriptive and explanatory nature. Obviously, as the spatial (dis)integration pattern of Albanian migrants is the focal point of this research, firstly, it is important to describe A.) the geographical location of their housing in Zakynthos Town (i.e. where); and B.) the material form of their housing conditions (i.e. how). Subsequently, separate research questions were formulated for each of the analytical dimensions so as to explain C.) the 'living' context of the housing situation of Albanian migrants – composed of certain economic, political and social aspects – which is an essential facet of this case-study for an integrated comprehension of individual values and meanings of specific residential patterns.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

CENTRAL QUESTION:

What interplay of economic, political and social dynamics motivates the pattern of spatial (dis)integration of Albanian immigrants in Zakynthos Town?

A. GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

- *What is the spatial distribution of Albanian immigrants' housing in Zakynthos Town?*
i.e. Where do they live?

B. MATERIAL FORM

- *What are the housing conditions of Albanian immigrants in Zakynthos Town compared to average local standards?*
i.e. How do they live?

C. 'LIVING' CONTEXT

Economic aspects:

- *How does the position of Albanian immigrants in the Zakynthian economy affect their level of spatial (dis)integration?*

i.e. What is their financial bargaining power on the housing market?

Points of Enquiry:

- Which sectors of the local economy employ Albanian immigrants?
- Occupational categorization of immigrant work force? (Male vs. female)
- What is the average income of the Albanian work force compared to the local Greeks?

Political aspects:

- *Which political instruments support the process of spatial (dis)integration of Albanian immigrants on Zakynthos?*

i.e. Are they getting help from (local) institutions to settle down?

Points of Enquiry:

- To what extent are regional/local governments competent in the provision and distribution of public/welfare services for immigrants?
- Are there any (local) provisions for social housing?
- To what extent are Albanian immigrants on Zakynthos politically organized / active?

Social aspects:

- *How do local networks of Albanian immigrants influence their degree of spatial (dis)integration in Zakynthos Town?*

i.e. Do migrants possess the necessary contacts to find a home?

Points of Enquiry:

- What is the public discourse surrounding Albanian immigrants? To what extent are the natives of Zakynthos 'Albanophobic'?
- To what extent do Albanian immigrants interact with the natives of Zakynthos in the private/public sphere? Interethnic networking??
- How do natives and immigrants perceive/use social spaces?

METHODOLOGY

– RESEARCH METHODS –

The findings of this study rely on data that was collected during five months of fieldwork on Zakynthos, from October 2005 to March 2006. In this time, the attempt was made to recollect all the available and relevant statistical data from various local institutions. However, considering the very nature of this integrated study and the life-histories approach that was taken towards the issue of the spatial integration of Albanian immigrants, qualitative research methods rose to the forefront as the most suitable and primary means of investigation throughout this case-study. Indeed, “the attractions of an ethnographic approach are numerous. It addresses the richness and complexity of human life and gets us closer to understanding the ways people interpret and experience the world [...] and it reminds us that the researcher only ever gains partial insight”. (Lees, 2003, p.110)

The reason this research chose to rely upon qualitative methods is primarily because they strive to emphasize multiple meanings and interpretations rather than seeking to impose any one ‘dominant’ or ‘correct’ interpretation (Hay, 2000). In fact, a humanistic approach in geography stresses the importance of human agency rather than a more narrow concern with decision-making processes; it does not refer to people merely as aggregate groups, but seeks to portray human experience and expression instead (Robinson, 1998, p. 408). Moreover, it acknowledges that the construction of social knowledge is a matter of interpretation and is geared towards “an analysis of meanings in specific contexts rather than a formulation of generalities” (Robinson, 1998, p. 408). Also, regarding the specific theme of this research, more notably, the utility of qualitative methods becomes particularly salient “if the individual ‘defining’ of the concept [in this case housing] and the subjective experiencing of the QoL [Quality of Life] are sought for” (Heyink and Tymstra, 1993, p.293).

The idea behind qualitative research is that without interacting with the research subjects, exploring their realities, or even personally experiencing their way of life, one cannot truly understand, and thus correctly analyze, their social behavior. There are various qualitative research methods, which can roughly be divided into three classifications: oral (interview-based), textual (analysis of creative texts, i.e. landscapes, documentaries, etc.), and observational (participant observation) (Hay, 2000, p.3). The findings and understandings of these particular means of investigation strongly rely on the identification of various ‘discourses’. A discourse – also referred to as a specific ‘knowledge formation’ (Talja, 1999, p. 467) – is “a system of signs through which realities are reproduced and legitimated. A discourse is a constructed system of arguments, ideologies and interpretations that shapes social practices, affecting the way we see things and talk about them” (definition by Hay, 2000, p. 187). Thus, qualitative research methods involve a careful deconstructive ‘reading’ of a person’s words and actions so as to be able to interpret the way different people construct symbols and associate meaning to certain events within particular contexts.

To a certain extent, all three of these qualitative methods were applied throughout this research. In fact, during the 5 months of fieldwork, 63 extensive semi-structured interviews (lasting between 1-2 hours) were held with Albanian immigrants residing in Zakynthos Town⁷. Additionally, short semi-structured interviews were held with several local real estate agents and officials employed in various sectors and tiers of public institutions – including employees of the IKA, the OAED, the Dimarchio, the Nomarchia, the Periferia, and the Koinokiki Yperesia.⁸ In the meanwhile, in an attempt to grasp the surrounding atmosphere, local newspapers and radio shows were also scrutinized. Last but not least, personal involvement with local society that comes from living in a small community also allowed for numerous contextual findings to be discovered through participant observation.

Of course, in reality, “to capture the multiple meanings of and interpretations of migration and place” (Findlay and Li, 1999, p.58), the kind of analysis that was attempted here would ideally require a combination of several research methods so as to be able to portray an entirely precise and complete picture of the situation at hand. Unfortunately, the truth is that 5 months is only a very short time and there is only so much one can do in such a limited time-span. Moreover, research never really runs as you plan it; somehow there are always unexpected setbacks that seem to make your disposable timeframe even shorter and require a reconsideration of which course of action is best. Still, as opposed to largely statistical surveys or political analyses, the primarily qualitative approach to the housing situation of immigrants used throughout this research – which interrogates the people firsthand concerned – centers upon a broad set of aspects in the attempt to move beyond a simply descriptive account of spatial integration patterns of immigrants on Zakynthos, into a more holistic analysis of this geographical phenomenon.

However, when it comes down to it, conducting research inevitably entails making a certain selection – be it of subjects, ideas, concepts, foci, etc. – whereby “ontology (beliefs about the world) and epistemology (ways of knowing the world) are [inescapably] linked to the methods we choose to use for research” (Winchester, 2000, p.3). As a matter of fact, “the production of knowledge, the results obtained, the type of research embarked upon, all in large part reflect the positionality of the researcher” (Lau & Pasquini, 2008, p. 554). Thus, while any kind of research involves taking a stand, the notion of positionality suggests the need for a careful consideration for the factors that influence a person’s identity, perspectives, worldviews and angles of perception (Lau & Pasquini, 2008, p. 554). The essential element is for the researcher to be aware of one’s position in relation to the research subjects and the audience he/she is addressing, and to acknowledge this consciousness through a process of constant self-interrogation – a practice that is also denominated as reflexivity.

⁷ The list of the questions and an appendix of the Albanian interviewees can be found in Annex I and II. Please note that the list of questions is rather elaborate and not all questions were discussed with all interviewees, especially as the interviewees opened up about certain issues without me explicitly having to ask for them. However, all the questions are subdivided into separate headings, which refer to the specific aspects of investigation of this research. Although perhaps not always in the same amount of detail, all of these aspects were in fact broadly discussed during all of the interviews.

⁸ The list of questions asked in this case can be found in Annex III.

– DIFFICULTIES & LIMITATIONS –

Truth be told, I started this study with lots of ambitions as to which research methods to apply – amongst which the idea of conducting a comparative survey on the housing conditions of the Albanians and the Greeks living in Zakynthos Town, and use GIS so as to assist the reader to graphically visualize the current state of affairs. Regrettably, as soon as I arrived on the field I realized I had to tone down these exaggerated ambitions and readjust my selection of research methods according to my investigative priorities, and to what was practically feasible considering the rather chaotic conditions and relatively short time-span within which I was to carry out this study.

Secondary Data

My desperation started from the very beginning really, when my search for an updated and accurate map of Zakynthos Town turned out to be exasperating! For some reason most of the maps of Zakynthos Town produced in Greece seem to be satisfied with a very rough drawing of the main roads of the area, placing certain institutional buildings in different locations than where they actually are, while adding others that do not even exist, for example. Moreover, it appears that on the entire island there is not a traceable map that covers the most recent extensions of Zakynthos Town. The result of all this is that I did not even manage to find an entirely suitable map and was forced to settle with something second-best. It is in effect quite ridiculous that, in the end, I here prefer to adopt the map provided by the foreign-based *Rough Guide to the Ionian Islands* simply because, out of all the available options, it turned out to be the most correct representation of Zakynthos Town! Annex V shows a satellite picture (*courtesy of Google Earth*) of the actual spread of Zakynthos Town. When comparing this to the map that was used to represent the spatial distribution of Albanians during this research, one can notice the latter misses the expansion of Town into the south-east especially.

The second and perhaps greatest difficulty that was encountered throughout this research was the fact that once I arrived on location, there appeared to be no reliable statistical data available on anything really. The biggest astonishment in all this was actually the discovery that public institutions on the island of Zakynthos do not use computers yet! The only official department that did digitalize its data recollection was the police (who are not always very willing to publicize any of their information though). But in all other institutions, everything is still done on paper! The problem with this is that local statistics on the situation of immigrants cannot be figured out with a simple click on a button, but would in most cases actually need to be counted by hand and sorted out from a never-ending pile of documents in hardcopy – provided that one is given access to these files, which is all too often strenuous to achieve! Furthermore, depending on their specific competences and fields of activity, various organizations in Greece are in charge of gathering different bits and pieces of information from the population, which results in fragmented and restricted databases as they are not combined into a comprehensive statistical ensemble. Finally, local institutions are only able to offer documentation on officially registered inhabitants, but there are also another 5000-7000 illegal immigrants estimated to be on the island, of which there are thus no records at all.

For the municipality of Zakynthos in particular the problem of missing data is even more dramatic due to the fact that their original building was caught up in a fire in 2004 and most paperwork got burnt, destroying (amongst other things) the only copies of all their documentation on hundreds of immigrants on the island.

Also, introducing my research topic as an issue of housing and city planning generally sparked enthusiasm on behalf of the locals for my research. However, the willingness of Zakynthians to assist me in the recollection of data regularly changed the moment it was cleared that this research was about Albanians in particular. Attitude then quickly turned from “oh that’s so interesting!!” to “but what do you care about Albanians??”. I must therefore remain wary of the fact that this kind of mind-set amongst many of the public officials on Zakynthos, in turn, possibly reflected itself in a general carelessness for the accuracy of data that was given to me.

If it was hard to even find out an exact answer to one of the most basic questions – i.e. how many Albanian immigrants are living in Zakynthos Town? – it was pretty much impossible to discover any accurate reports on more detailed characteristics of these migrants. The general bureaucratic inefficiency of the local institutions and the non collaboration between the various organs and departments that are dealing with immigration-related issues on Zakynthos results in incomplete and contradictory databases. Consequently, all together, a chaotic and confusing frame of statistical records admittedly makes it close to impossible to truly validate the selected sample as a proportionate representation of the larger Albanian population on Zakynthos.

Qualitative Data

Furthermore, establishing a relation with the members of the Albanian community was not, in any way, easy to accomplish! Due to commonly precarious living conditions (on the verge) of illegality and a constant fear of deportation, many Albanians are very mistrusting of people they do not know, and it seems as though they generally try to stay out of visible sight as much as possible. It was therefore rather difficult to win over a few Albanians and succeed in getting them to really trust me and act as catalyzing informants!

Even though I always made it clear from the very beginning that I was from the Netherlands, and thus a foreigner on Zakynthos too, I noticed that many Albanians that I approached through local Greek acquaintances seemed to be afraid to engage into a conversation with me about their experiences of integration on the island. Probably because they feared that whatever they would tell me I would then pass onto the local Greeks, who would then be able to use any comments against them. Hence, whereas at first I thought it would be a good idea to be introduced to Albanians through my Greek acquaintances, in order to provide my interviewees more comforted freedom and obtain more honest answers, I soon realized it was more efficient to approach Albanian immigrants on my own so that they would not immediately associate me with a certain person that was living permanently on the island and could later on eventually cause them any damage if any confidential information was actually publicized.

All in all, it definitely took me a while to get the ball rolling...! Yet, despite the fact that the generic introversion and suspicion of Albanians on Zakynthos hampered a rapid take-off for this study, perseverance eventually paid off, and following a funny incident⁹ I was so lucky to be given the opportunity to establish a fairly close bond with an Albanian man. Once I managed to create this familiar contact in the Albanian community, it was possible to use the snowballing effect to progressively get in touch with more potential research subjects. Women however, were significantly harder to approach than men, and even more reluctant to openly speak up their minds, conceivably due to the fact that women in Albanian society are often found to be living rather sheltered lives confined within the domestic realms of male-dominated households.

Language was also an occasional barrier during the course of this research. On the one hand, since I do not speak any Albanian, informative interviews could only be held with Albanians that actually spoke some Greek, which were generally those who had already been on the island for some time. Therefore, it was not possible to discuss the housing situation of Albanian immigrants with people who had only just arrived on the island and had not yet had the opportunity to learn to speak the Greek language to a minimum level of understanding. Hence, unfortunately, a fairly large section of the actual target group was automatically excluded from this research. On the other hand, the fact that I myself do not speak perfect Greek either somehow made my interviewees relax and feel more at ease in their own speech. Perhaps we did not always know how to say something in words, but through hands, gestures, drawings, and sometimes even through some Italian wordings, we generally managed to make sense out of each other. Due to the fact that Albanians on Zakynthos themselves often struggle with the Greek language, I honestly believe that not speaking perfect Greek somehow helped me to create a more comfortable environment for my interviewees to say whatever they wanted to say without feeling utterly embarrassed about any limited language skills.

Finally, due to their often frightened and timid participation to my interviews I did not even ever suggest to tape-record any of the conversations I held with Albanians. This was a choice I made because I was simply too afraid that such a proposition would put them off immediately. So instead (after asking my subjects if they were ok with me taking notes), while talking to them I would write down key words / sentences / quotes of their answers, and only wrote out the entire interview once I was back behind my own desk, alone. Concededly, I must remain vigilant for any possible distortions my particular recollection of memories (as well as the written translation for that matter!) might have created for the interpretation of any actual 'discourses' or 'meanings' of the interviewees.

⁹ I resided in a fairly desolated area on Zakynthos that is close to a horse farm, where one day an Albanian worker left the gate open, allowing one of the horses to escape... As this horse ended up in my backyard, and I could see this man desperately running around to try and catch the horse, I went to help him and we ended up spending the entire afternoon chasing this horse, up and down the mountain, until we finally caught it. Not giving anything away of the little accident that had happened to this Albanian man to the Zakynthian landowner employing him (who is basically my neighbor), somehow made me earn his confidentiality! The Albanian man came back to thank me the next day; he had been to my place before to come and cut the lawn so he knew my family, we sat down for a coffee, had the opportunity to have a nice chat, and...luckily, he showed great interest and enthusiasm for my research!

– CLOSING REMARK –

On the whole, it is important to remember how, in this postmodern era, we have come to the realization that no study can ever claim to depict a complete picture of any social phenomenon, or contain the absolute truth from an objective point of view for that matter – while defining one’s own perspective, a researcher inevitably ends up making a personal selection of ideas and beliefs out of a wide range of available evidence. In fact, the existing literature surrounding the issue of migration and housing presents an enormous range of variation in the exact focal points and the approaches of social scientists, yet it all presumably rests on solid argumentations, thereby earning ‘situated’ scientific validity. That is why the essential message to stress is that, in this respect, the findings presented throughout this study do not pretend to be any less unbiased. I too have specifically chosen to discuss certain aspects of international migration and the spatial element of integration which, according to individual ‘socio-scientific’ criteria of mine, deserved more (or less) attention.

I am also well aware of the fact that, as a result of the broad selection of scientific evidence that I have made for the theoretical backbone of this study, the approach applied throughout this research may appear to be of limited accuracy or detail to some. Others may want to accuse me of oversimplifying the analytical dimensions of the spatial integration of immigrants with the apparently sharp distinction between influential economic, political and social aspects – especially as these dimensions are not entirely independent from each other and the lines of separation between one dimension and the other are, admittedly, often blurred. Finally, considering all the particularities that define separate locations and individualities, the list of factors that could influence the way immigrants spatially integrate into a hosting society is so extensive that it becomes, in reality, inexhaustible. Accordingly, this study is conscious of any inherent limitations, and thereby recommends a cautious interpretation of the generalizations that it puts forward.

PART IV: THE ISLAND of ZAKYNTHOS

This chapter presents the generic discoveries of this research concerning the political, economic and social geography of the island of Zakynthos so as to allow for an understanding of the contextual framework surrounding the issue of immigrant housing in particular. The reports in this introductory section are based on either a) available statistical records b) short semi-structured interviews with public officials from various institutions on Zakynthos, and c) observations recollected through participant observation within the Zakynthian community.

POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY

The island of Zakynthos is a prefecture of the region of the Ionian Islands. It is composed of six municipalities: Elation, Alikon, Arkadion, Artemision, Lagana, and Zakynthion. The prefectural capital is Zakynthos Town (See Map 1).

In Greece, the *Nomos* – presided by a directly elected Prefect – constitutes the second tier of local government and is supposed to be a self-governed agency that is responsible for the administration of local matters at the prefectural level. Its tasks and competences cover various areas, including issues of economic development, employment, public healthcare, infrastructure, and environmental protection. The *Dimos* – headed by the Mayor, who is also directly elected by the local electoral community – represents the first tier of local government and is, in turn, responsible for the administration of local matters at the municipal level.¹⁰



Despite the ongoing process of decentralization in Greece that attempts to devolve tasks and competences from the central government to these lower tiers of government, and the existence of an 'intermediary' regional government as well – the *Periferia*, which represents the Government in the various regions – the prefectures and municipalities of Greece are still heavily dependent on the central state as far as the provision and specification of their financial budget is concerned. Although Greek municipalities, including those on Zakynthos, are growingly trying to manage their own resources (e.g. imposing local taxes, privatizing municipal services cost-efficiently, etc.), the bulk of their revenue derives from the 'central autonomous funds', which are state grants comprised of a set percentage of governmental revenues. In this manner, the central state, assisted by their extended authority in the regional governments, maintains a persuasive stronghold in dictating the rules that the Prefect of the island and the Mayors of the municipalities of Zakynthos need to abide by to effectively achieve a successful implementation of their policies (see Lalenis & Liogkas, 2002; Getimis and Grigoriadou, 2004).

After a long-lasting period of political governance by the social-democratic PASOK (Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement), during the last couple of electoral terms the representatives of the Nea Dimokratia (New Democracy) – the main center-right political party in Greece – have become increasingly popular on Zakynthos. Nevertheless, no matter what side of the political

¹⁰ For more detail on the institutional structure in Greece see, for example, Hlepas (2001). For further elaborations on the latest structural reforms you can consult Staikouras (2004).

spectrum the island is on, one thing seems to have remained a fairly constant feature of the local political structure – a severe lack of transparency and formality in its procedures! The latest scandal on the island surrounding the imprisonment of the Mayor of Zakynthos Town along with large part of his entourage for embezzlement¹¹, and the fraudulent management of the National Marine Park of Zakynthos¹² are two prime examples of the ambiguity of Zakynthian politics / politicians.

As far as immigration is concerned, at this point, both residence and working permit applications in Greece need to be filed at the relevant municipality (*Dimos*). Working permit applications are then sent on to the Prefecture (*Nomarchio*), where the departmental OAED (that represents the Ministry of Labor) looks at the necessity for foreign employment in the local labor market and decides whether a working permit should be granted in a certain case or not. Instead, residence permits are only handed out after a joint agreement of the representatives of the Ministry of Interiors, the Ministry of Labor, and the Ministry of Public Order within the Regional government (*Periferia*).

According to the information provided by an employee of the Dimos, in 2004 alone there were more than 5000 applications for working permits by foreign citizens, of which more than half were supposedly people from Albania. Regrettably, I was unable to get a hold of precise numbers of working and residence permits that were in fact handed out on the island that year. Regarding this issue, I questioned a public official working at the ‘foreigners department’ (‘ypirisia allodapon’) at the Periferia – which should be the institution most likely to be in possession of a complete set of data as it processes and ultimately makes the final decisions concerning all applications for residence permits – and the answer I got was simply:

“...every institution has different type of data, and there is no overall classification or system that combines all of this information together. The IKA has data on their employment status; the periferia knows who has adeies paramonis, etc. Everybody does their own thing. The various institutions do not cooperate and do not agree on anything here... Basically, I cannot tell you how many foreigners there are exactly on the island, or what they’re doing really either...I do not know it.”

¹¹ For further information see the article ‘Mayor of Zakynthos Arrested’ published 14 sept. 2007 by *Imera Ton Zakynthos* (local newspaper) online: <<http://www.imerazante.gr/imerazante/en/detail.php?ID=3228>>

¹² The *National Marine Park of Zakynthos* (NMPZ) exemplifies the outrageousness of the inefficiency and dubiousness of local governments and institutions on Zakynthos. The Bay of Laganas in Zakynthos is a protected territory because it is the biggest nesting area for the loggerhead sea turtle. The administration and protection of this natural park is the responsibility of the apposite NMPZ, an organization that receives special funding from the central state and the European Union. The efficiency of the NMPZ obviously largely depends on a constructive cooperation with other prefectural and municipal bodies on the island. However, at the moment, the entire direction of this National Marine Park has more or less been put on hold. Greece has been fined by the European Union for not respecting the protective regulations and the entire thing has turned into an international scandal. Although funding for compensation was in fact provided, those people on Zakynthos who could no longer exploit their land because of new environmental legislations did not actually receive any of this money! No wonder these people have gone ahead with the construction of abusive housing and the development of tourist activities to make a living, regardless of any laws prohibiting it. It then so happens that the local police, who should be the one to control these kinds of activities, all too often turns a blind eye to these kind of illegal situations, either because they are befriended with the people involved, or because they do not wish to be the aim of any possible retaliations... All this to indicate the levels of negligence and corruption within the political structures of Zakynthos! If Zakynthians do not hesitate to be this scrupulous towards ‘their own people’, one is only left to wonder what could possibly happen to an unwanted ‘foreigner’ dealing with legal entities...

Also, it doesn't appear as though the recent adaptations of the specific organizational structure on Zakynthos significantly facilitate the political integration of Albanian immigrants on the island compared to other regions or major urban centers in Greece. Due to the fact that Greece as a country is still fairly new at the 'control immigration game', existing rules and regulations that apply to the regions/prefectures/municipalities in this field are occasionally revised and amended. Talking to several public officials working at the prefecture of Zakynthos and the municipality of Zakynthos Town, it became apparent that these changes imposed by the central government in the procedures are quite often resented at the local level. In effect, civil servants that are employed in local institutions on Zakynthos feel a certain kind of frustration about rules continuously being changed by the central government without them having any input in it, and especially, without them being well-informed about these alterations or getting the opportunity to prepare themselves for the implementation of these changes. Consequently, public employees feel they fail to understand what their actual roles and responsibilities are within the wider institutional organization.

"...unfortunately this is how things go... They [politicians] keep making new laws in Athens and assigning competences to random institutions without even telling us [civil servants] what is going on... we often don't know what they expect us to do anymore..."

(Civil servant working at the dimos of Zakynthos Town)

Such a fluctuating and 'chaotic' institutional framework as that mentioned above, in turn, affects the average waiting period for immigrants to obtain their permits – something which is very well captured by the following passage of a conversation with a particularly dedicated civil servant, who worked at the periferia until recently and now works for the Citizen Information Desk at the Community Service Office of Zakynthos:

"In the office I was working at, if they [the immigrants] had everything in order, they would get their working permit within a week. To obtain their residence permit from the periferia for the first time it takes about 2.5 months, and then to renew it takes about 2 weeks. But the thing is that it all depends on the communication that is going on between the dimos / nomarchio and the periferia. Normally by law the dimos is required to send all the applications to the periferia every 2 weeks, on the 1st of the month and on the 15th. But that does not always happen... Besides, they keep on changing the procedure for the application of working and residence permits. First it worked one way – for example working permits were handed out by our office at the periferia – but now everything has been shifted to the dimos, all applications must be filed there. But the problem with this constant changing of procedures is that both the immigrants and the public officials get very confused... Now that things have been moved into the hands of the dimos you get that the people working there are totally unprepared for this type of procedures. First of all there is not enough personnel – only 2 people at the dimos are assigned to these tasks, 3 people in the periferia – and then they are untrained, they have not even read the new laws, they do not know what they are doing, they do not know what exact papers and

information immigrants have to bring in separate individual cases! It took me a long time to understand the laws, figure out the requirements in different cases, etc... but if they keep changing who does what, in the end nobody knows what they are doing anymore! Besides, the few people taking care of these things at the dimos now are drowning in work and that doesn't make them very willing to help the immigrants with their paperwork. Imagine, a lot of these people barely speak any Greek, and they do not know how to read or write it, yet they are given the application sheet and they are told to fill this in and bring it back. Without any help that is just impossible for them to do, so I have them coming to me in this new office now (exipiretisi politon) to help them with that... Where can they go otherwise?!"

Besides pointing out how the official regularization of immigrants might be delayed due to the fact that foreigners are not always able to communicate properly in Greek, thereby struggling to provide the extensive list of required documentation, the above passage also hints at the fact that there generally seems to be little willingness on behalf of public officials to assist those immigrants who are having difficulties with their applications. In effect, the general tone of several public officials of Zakynthos that were interviewed did not sound particularly enthusiastic about the presence of such large numbers of Albanian immigrants. 5 civil servants were asked whether they had ever had any problems with Albanians in their office. Three of these civil servants had even felt the need to call the police in one or more occasions, and all five were able to mention one or more examples of 'tense' situations they had found themselves in.

One mentioned: *"I rather not deal with them [the Albanians] because they do not speak Greek, I do not know how to communicate with them – you can talk to them for hours but they just do not understand...at some point I just get nervous (ekneuriazomai)...and I do not intend to learn Albanian to be able to help them".*

Another stressed how: *"Nobody really likes them [Albanians]. They tend to be a bit ruder and less kind than other immigrants from the Balkans. Russians and Bulgarians for example talk to you in plydithiko, whereas Albanians talk to you like esy, auti, kai tetoia...In fact, the other immigrants from the Balkans don't even want to be associated with them, they stand in different lines, and you can see how they always look at them [the Albanians] me miso mati...".*

And according to a third Zakynthian public official Albanians were bluntly 'animals' (zoa): *"...they come into your office, do not say hello goodday or nothing, always fail to bring the right documentation,... do you know most of them can't even write or read?! ... Anyway, and then they get upset when you tell them that you cannot give them their papers just yet...! Eh but what can I do?? It's not my fault that you can't follow instructions! They're animals these people I'm telling you! (einai zoa sou lew!)"*

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

The livelihood of most of the Zakynthians today relies on two main economic activities:

1) **Agriculture:** Due to its geographical position the island enjoys a mild Mediterranean climate with a significant amount of rainfall that allows for a profitable cultivation of crops – especially of olives, grapes and citrus fruits (Daskalakis, 1996). The agricultural produce of the island that is aimed at commercial purposes comes primarily from the agrarian enterprises located on the flat and fertile plane occupying the Southern interior of the island. The municipalities where agricultural activities are most intense are therefore those of Lagana and Artemision. Additionally, a significant amount of land in the Vasilikos peninsula in the municipality of Zakynthion is dedicated to the cultivation of olive trees in particular.

2) **Tourism:** Since the construction of the airport in the 90s, tourism has been a booming industry on Zakynthos. Nowadays between 600.000 and 1.000.000 tourists – an overwhelming majority of which are either English or Italian – visit the island on a yearly basis! A growing amount of tourist resorts has been emerging along the sandy beaches in the Southern municipality of Lagana in particular, as well as on those of the eastern coast of the island in the municipalities of Alykon, Arkadion and Zakynthion. The north and northwestern



parts of the island are generally scarcely populated compared to the south and southeastern areas of the island, and also much less exploited in terms of tourism due to the fact that these are the more mountainous areas where the presence of high cliffs denies easy access to the beaches (the most notable exception here being the surrounding area of the port of Agios Nikolaos, where the development of tourism has actually been stepping up over the past few years).

Traditionally, a large part of the island's inhabitants devoted themselves to the cultivation of sultanas for the production of local wines, whose reputations have gained national fame. However, whereas agriculture used to be an utterly vital sector of the Zakynthian economy until fairly recently, it is steadily losing grounds in terms of output and employment rates. At present, the island is in fact highly dependent on tourism. Estimates of the Prefecture and of the OAED both claim about 70% of the incomes of the islanders in 2004 to have been generated through tourist-oriented businesses!

According to the latest comprehensive data of 2005 of the prefectural department of the Social Insurance Institute (IKA) on Zakynthos, 33.6% of the local labor force is registered as being employed in the primary sector of the economy (i.e. agriculture), 10% in the secondary (i.e. construction), and 56.4% in the tertiary sector (i.e. services).

Exact percentages of foreign labor forces in the total workforce on Zakynthos or absolute numbers of immigrants employed in various sectors of the Zakynthian economy are impossible to obtain due to the fact that an unknown yet certainly significant proportion of migrants is engaged in informal activities and their participation to the labor market goes by unnoticed in official statistics. Nonetheless, despite ambiguity on the actual proportions, according to the IKA on Zakynthos, it is a fact that the sectors of the Zakynthian economy that generally rely most on immigrant labor forces are those of construction, agriculture, domestic services, and, on a more seasonal basis, fishing. Regrettably, recent and precise data on the numbers of Albanian immigrants registered in each of these branches were not disclosed. Besides, official numbers would not be reliable either according to one public employee of the Dimos, who said that:

“...even if Albanians are registered as working in agriculture, they only say that because insurance is cheaper to get if you are registered in agriculture than in construction. And so they say they work in agriculture but then in fact work in construction. It is very expensive for them to get the necessary stamps (10.000 – 11.000 drachmes) to be ensured, so often they sell them to others too. But very few Albanians work in agriculture really, the large majority of them works in construction. In agriculture it is mostly Bulgarians, Indians, and Rumanians rather than Albanians.”

Despite these ambiguities, public officials who were approached at the IKA and at the Dimos roughly estimated 40% of the employed Albanians on Zakynthos to work in agriculture, 40% in construction, and 20% in services. (The fishing industry mainly relies on Pakistani and Egyptian employees that are called in on a seasonal contract – no Albanian immigrants are recorded to be working in this sector.)

Considering the delicacy of the issue, only very reluctantly are statistical statements ever made about the size of the informal economy on Zakynthos. However, according to the casual estimates of multiple local islanders running their own businesses on Zakynthos, at least half of the island's monetary flows are unregistered informal transactions! Although these are in fact mere indications, considering that the informal economy of Greece is estimated to produce around 30-40% of their national GDP, it should not be surprising to see the respective figures for Zakynthos – an island that derives a large share of its income from tourism and agriculture, 2 particularly sensitive sectors in terms of informal contracting – indeed score higher than the national average. Besides, as in the rest of Greece, the Zakynthian economy too is composed of small-scale family businesses that all too commonly hire people on the basis of informal verbal contracts. What drives a person into accepting the conditions of such forms of contracting is the rationale that if an employer has to pay fewer contributions, he's likely to be willing to give his employees a higher pay. As a result, many job-seekers apparently opt for instant undeclared cash rather than for formal future guarantees.

The local unemployment rate in 2003 reached as high as 13.6% on Zakynthos. Although unfortunately the respective official figures are lacking, according to both IKA and OAED, unemployment rates are deemed to be particularly high amongst Zakynthian youngsters (20-30 years old). As in other rural areas, the ever more educated youth on Zakynthos finds a discrepancy between their qualifications and the available jobs on the market and increasingly aspires to do 'greater' things. Besides, social stigmatization of certain forms of employment has intensified on the island of Zakynthos with the arrival of immigrants and their commitment to specific branches of the labor market, whereby many young Zakynthians now plainly refuse to do certain jobs that they would perhaps still have considered taking on a decade ago.

The older generation saw those jobs that are now occupied by foreign (Albanian) labor forces still being done by native islanders. A large part of the population on Zakynthos is thereby still able to at least acknowledge the immigrants' contribution to the prolongation of the traditional ways of life on the island. In this respect, Zakynthians do generally recognize the fact that without the arrival of so many immigrants over the past decade the survival of certain traditional activities on the island would have been endangered. They generally also acknowledge the fact that Albanians are very hard workers, willing to work long hours for little money. However, they often remain in doubt about their actual abilities:

"They're not well trained and do things carelessly. When you get an Albanian to build you a wall you will pay less than if you get a Greek person to do it, but you will be cleaning up the mess he left behind, Greek people are more precise and neater".

(middle aged Zakynthian shop owner)

Instead, the younger generation is growing up in a society that has slowly but surely gotten acquainted with the idea of professed 'second-class' citizens taking on the heaviest and dirtiest jobs. Since Zakynthian youngsters are generally assured a roof above their head and food on the table thanks to the boundless presence and support of their families, all too often they do not feel the urge to take on just any kind of job so as to be able to make a living. Especially since the salaries on Zakynthos (like in the rest of Greece in general) are particularly low and do not easily allow for someone to be self-sufficient¹³, many youngsters on Zakynthos prefer to remain unemployed and stick to parental pampering (at least until they do not move away from the island) rather than having to take on several jobs to make it on their own.

"What?!? You think I'm an Albanian or something that I am going to work two jobs?!? You are not well in the head!!"

(24 year old Zakynthian looking for a job)

¹³ Generally, depending on which branch one finds employment in, a young starter in Greece is lucky to make somewhere in between 600 and 1000 Euros a month net on average.

The national minimum wage in Greece lies around 25 Euros a day and 560 Euros a month (for the Netherlands the comparative figure is about 1260 Euros a month – 700 Euros more! For more comparative figures see Funk, L., and Lesch, H., (2005), 'Minimum Wages in Europe', available online on the site of the European Industrial Relations Observatory (EIRO), <<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2005/07/study/tn0507101s.htm>>.

Rather, Zakynthian youth regularly seem to choose to focus their activities on the tourist season and make a good income during the summer through family businesses (hotels, rent-a-room, rent-a-car, tour-guides, etc.) or by working in the entertainment industry (restaurants, bars, clubs), to then make it through the winter on these savings.

“Yea we have lots of Albanians; half of the island is... But if it weren’t for them I would not have a teratsa, a kitchen, or a plumber... the best plumbers are Albanian! They work very hard, they keep the island running....’cause you see, we have another problem here....young people don’t do anything!! They just sit on their couches and go for coffees in the afternoon, that’s all they do!! They don’t work....I know other guys of my age that never work! In summer they work for the umbrellas and ksaplostres, so they can chill at the beach all day, and at night they might work in a bar or just go out every night....and the whole winter they just sit and do nothing!! I was looking for a DJ to replace me once, and I ended up having to hire an English guy because nobody of the island wanted to work! I first got this local guy, I taught him everything, how to do it [spinning] and everything, he did it one night, then the next day he comes back to me and says: “man, I can’t do this, I’m tired...” Can you imagine?!?! ‘IM TIRED??’ So I had to go and give the money to an English guy instead, ‘cause he was ‘tired’....I’m telling you man, young people don’t do anything here, they get 300 Euros from the unemployment office and just chill, they are so lazy it’s unbelievable....!!

(30-year old DJ employed at local radio station)

This perhaps serves to explain why the youngsters on Zakynthos do not appear to feel threatened by the presence of a large and flexible immigrant labor force. When asked if they felt intimidated by the increase in competition on the labor market in Zakynthos, the idea that cheap and flexible immigrant labor forces risk to bring down the average wages on the island was indeed mentioned as a source of concern by several people:

“...now with all these Albanians it is basically impossible for a Greek person to find a well-paid job, they are willing to work for half the price!”

(26 year old Zakynthian male)

Yet, despite this kind of apprehension, the general feeling amongst the local youth with respect to their chances of success on the local labor market was, at the same time, also very much along the lines of:

“What competition?! There is no competition...! An Albanian is not going to take my job re...what you think I want to clean pig stalls for the rest of my life?! We do not aim for the same jobs; they’re not going to ‘steal’ my job...”

(Unemployed 25 year-old with a Degree in Business & Marketing)

SOCIAL GEOGRAPHY

The precise population residing on the island is difficult to determine for several reasons. The most obvious reason of course is the fact that, according to local estimates, there is a significantly large group of unregistered immigrants living on the island, whose exact numbers are impossible to determine as there is simply no data whatsoever on their whereabouts. Also, Zakynthos is an island that has been attracting more and more elderly (northern) Europeans – especially from the UK – to come and settle for their retirement, be it permanently or seasonally. Many of these immigrants that come from other EU countries do not actually register in Zakynthos even though they do end up spending most of the year on the island. Last but not least, Greek citizens must be registered in the municipality where they wish to vote, and this does not necessarily correspond to the locality where they actually live. Despite these ambiguities, according to the latest official data obtained from the Prefecture, in 2005 the island had a population of 42.503 inhabitants. However, in view of the large amounts of undocumented immigrants on Zakynthos, informal estimates of the Prefecture deem the actual all-year-round population of the island to be somewhere closer to 50.000 inhabitants instead.

The social composition of the population of Zakynthos has gone through some particularly rapid and noteworthy changes over the last two decades, especially as a result of the large numbers of immigrants that have been settling on the island. In fact, ever since the 90s, immigrants originating from close to 80 different countries have come to constitute a truly multi-ethnic population on Zakynthos.¹⁴ Lamentably, accurate data on the actual number of foreign residents legally registered on the island is lacking as various sources of information seem to contradict each other. According to the latest data collected by the headquarters of the local police – which is the only institutionalized department on the island that has adopted the use of computers and digitalized databases, and where every foreign resident staying more than 3 months on the island is obliged by law to register – there were 7105 foreign residents legally registered on Zakynthos in 2005. The dominant part of these foreign residents – 2797 in total – was from Albania. The second largest group of foreign residents according to this same source was that of British citizens (1451). However, the *Periferia* presents different numbers. In fact, according to their figures there were close to 12.000 foreign residents in 2005 that were allegedly in possession of a valid residence permit on the island, of which circa 8000 were Albanians! Unfortunately, I was not given access to their archives so as to be able to verify the veracity of these figures.

¹⁴ Even a relatively small locality like Zakynthos serves to reflect the diversification and intensification of migratory patterns towards the South of Europe these days! In fact – according to the latest data provided by the local Police on foreign residents registered on Zakynthos – the list of the countries of origin of the immigrants in 2005 included (in alphabetical order): Afghanistan, Albania, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bosnia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Byelorussia, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, India, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Korea, Lebanon, Lithuania, Libya, Malaysia, Mexico, Moldavia, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Rumania, Russia, Rwanda, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Somalia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, USA, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Vietnam.

Overall, the natives of Zakynthos are rather proud of their specific historical background, most notably of their international heritage and their intellectual avant-gardism. The cultural influences that followed the French and especially the Venetian colonization of the Ionian Islands are often recollected by the people of Zakynthos to distinguish the social developments of their region from any other region in Greece that endured long-lasting oppressive Turkish rule instead. In fact, the relatively tolerant occupation of the Venetians allowed greater freedom for local cultural movements to continue to flourish, and the emergence of notorious Zakynthian personalities – such as the poets Dionysios Solomos and Ugo Foscolo for example – eventually established the island to be a ground of renowned literary pioneers. Following these traditions, natives of Zakynthos generally describe the island as a place where liberal visions of multiculturalism and elevated levels of education have not only been persistently characterizing features of the island’s societal past, but also continue to be so at present.

The population of Zakynthos enjoys relatively high educational levels considering the fact that it is an island region – local governmental agencies show to be well aware of the value of education and knowledge for their children and the future of the island, and I have repeatedly been told by their representatives how school attendance is very high amongst the youth on Zakynthos – something they appear to be rather proud of. The island even offers a Master’s degree, in the management of protected areas ironically enough, that manages to lure in a small hundred students from other areas of Greece... However, the overwhelming majority of the island’s youth nowadays moves away from Zakynthos once they have completed high school to go study at university in one of the bigger urban centers of Greece, from nearby Patras to distant Thessaloniki. As these youngsters acquire better qualifications, they aspire to break out of the more traditional way of life that would possibly await them on the island of Zakynthos. Rather than contenting themselves with taking over the family business on Zakynthos, they now aim to obtain specialized functions in the labor market that will allow them to reach growing levels of prosperity – forms of employment that are primarily to be found in the primate city of Athens. Hence, like many other island/rural regions in Greece, Zakynthos too suffers from the continuous out-migration of young people to the cities.

“You know what the problem is? The youth today wants to do other things than we used to in the past... They go to school...they leave for university...they don’t want to be farmers anymore...I hear of so many youngsters that are leaving the island! Who is going to be running the businesses here if they all go?? In the meanwhile there is nobody there to work the land! Me too, if it weren’t for the Albanians that came to work for me, I do not know how I would have survived... My son went to Athens after his studies and stayed there ever since; he got a job in some bank, he’s married; he does not want to come back and take over my business here...My daughter too, she studied in Patra for some years, then she came back, and now she works for the Dimos here sti Hora... but she’s does not want to come and take care of the farm...not now not ever she told me!”

(63 year old Zakynthian farmer in Vassilikos)

Despite the recognition of the migrants' contributions to the local economy, raising social appreciation for 'the foreigner' on Zakynthos, especially for Albanians, seems to be a very slow and reluctant process for the natives of the island. As a matter of fact, locals are constantly exaggerating about the number of Albanians on the island: *"More than half of the population here now is Albanian!"* Yet according to the official numbers the foreign population is only about one third of the total population, and the Albanians constitute 2/3 of that. Still this seems to be enough for the local population to feel that Zakynthos is sort of being 'invaded' and 'taken over' by Albanians. Remarks like *"There are schools in the villages in the mountains where there are more Albanian children than Greek ones! It's one against one now!"* show how Zakynthians tend to feel threatened by the presence of large groups of Albanians.

"Things have changed here over the past decade especially. Before I was never afraid on this island, never feared any confrontations, now though you never know, people are carrying knives and guns, we have all these Albanians now... it's just different now, one must be much more alert and careful..."

(36 year old Zakynthian male)

Whereas West European citizens in particular – though still and always a 'foreigner' – are generally well received and warmly welcomed on the island of Zakynthos, a shadow of constant suspicion constantly appears to be hanging over the non western foreigners instead. As a matter of fact, like in the rest of Greece, amongst the native population of Zakynthos there appears to be a fairly rooted mistrust of specifically Albanian immigrants, with locals especially expressing concerns about the maintenance of safety and public order in society. A pretty common view that derives from this (perhaps moderate but nevertheless discernible degree of) so-called 'albanophobia' of local Zakynthians is that Albanians are a people that is supposedly 'not to be trusted' and will not hesitate to 'do you harm when they feel like it'. Consequently, as soon as there is crime or violence taking place on the island, the finger of blame is all too often very quickly pointed at Albanians.



Fig. 2 – "Greece of Greeks"

In reality, of all immigrants on Zakynthos, the level of condescension that is geared towards Albanians appears to be the most pungent above all. In daily life it is not uncommon to notice how immigrants from other countries are generally treated with more respect and courtesy than the average Albanian person in Zakynthos Town. Regrettably, slowly but surely, mocking and ridiculing seem to become common practices towards Albanian immigrants in particular by local Zakynthians.

Curiously enough, Zakynthian youngsters seem to out more aggravated disdain for the alleged social 'retardness' and inaptitude of Albanians than they express frustration over a possible increase in competition or saturation of the labor market.

"You can recognize them from their so unfashionable style. Even if they have money, Albanians will never know how to dress. They have nothing in their country, and then when they come here they still do not know how to dress. They will never learn."

(24 year old male sitting opposite Albanians in a bar)

Nonetheless, the local population is very much opposed to the idea that they would not be 'tolerant' or 'open-minded' people. Instead the opinion of the general public appears to proclaim that:

"The fact that we do not have any racism in Greece despite the fact that we have such high proportions of foreigners [an estimated 1,5 million foreigners] compared to the local population [10 million Greeks] means we can handle it (to andexoume)."

(Zakynthian Judge)

In other words, the general discourse concerning the presence and the housing of such large proportionate figures of immigrants on the island does not show the local population (or politicians) as having a lot of willingness to do anything to change or improve the current state of affairs, or even to acknowledge there would be any kind of 'problem' for that matter.

Both a notorious Judge and an attorney from Zakynthos, during a casual conversation, claimed there weren't any noticeable difficulties with the integration of the Albanians on the island, or in Greece even. Regarding the specific issue of housing accommodations for migrants the lawyer immediately replied: *"what, they live in houses don't they?!"*, and then proceeded with saying how:

"... here in Greece we do not have any racism. Racism is when the state or society takes legal measures to discredit certain ethnic minorities; we do not have that here. It is one thing to say 'palioalbanno'¹⁵ during a conversation...who may have broken into my house a month earlier! and it is something else to say racism!"

(Notorious Zakynthian lawyer engaged in local politics)

This passage exemplifies what seems to me to be a fairly common contradiction on the island: on the one hand, local Zakynthians claim not to be prejudiced towards Albanian immigrants. Yet, on the other hand, the word 'Albanian' has, of its own, turned into an insult with specific connotations amidst the local population on Zakynthos!

¹⁵ which could be translated into something like 'rotten Albanian'

ZAKYNTHOS TOWN

The harbor of Zakynthos Town is and always has been the main port on the island of Zakynthos. The existence of this gate of communication with the mainland has not only stimulated Zakynthos Town to turn into the largest settlement of its municipality, but has ultimately also allowed for it to become the economic, political and cultural capital of the entire prefecture. The most important public institutions – including the courthouse, the Municipality of the island of Zakynthos, and the representation of the regional government of the Ionian Islands – are all to be found in Zakynthos Town. Moreover, a large number of the trading businesses operating on the island have their headquarters vested in Zakynthos Town, and it is most certainly the place with the largest choice on the island in terms of shopping facilities. Also, numerous cultural activities take place in Zakynthos Town throughout the year, including musical concerts, theatrical shows, and the ample celebration of traditional local holidays.

Fig. 3 – Panoramic View of Zakynthos Town from Bochali



As opposed to many other localities on the island, Zakynthos Town is a growing settlement that really ‘lives’ all year long – it does not ‘die out’ as soon as the tourists are gone. As a matter of fact, it seems to be one of the few settlements on the island that has remained more or less exclusively reserved for the residence and business of people that are staying on the island all year long – its prosperity thrives off the benefits of intense seasonal tourism on the rest of the island, but Zakynthos Town itself has made only very few concessions to it.

Due to the relatively small size of Zakynthos Town – or *Hora* as the locals like to call it – the locality is not further subdivided into official neighborhoods with clear-cut boundaries. At the moment Zakynthos Town stretches out over about 2,5km in length; Lombardou Avenue (also known as Strada Marina) connects two of the main squares that are located on opposing fringes of the Town: Agios Dionysios Square in the south and Solomos Square in the north. The width of Zakynthos Town extends to some 850 meters along the Charalambos river in the southern part of Town, but – confined by the surrounding mountains – occasionally narrows down to a mere 100 meters as one moves northwards.

In 1953, the island of Zakynthos was hit by a devastating earthquake of 8.1 on the scale of Richter, which caused an unforgettable loss of life and destroyed most historical structures on the island. For Zakynthos Town the quake had particularly destructive implications, as it provoked an enormous fire that ended up enclosing the Town of Zakynthos within two fronts of flames and burnt down pretty much everything that was still standing. Unfortunately, even though the town was then gradually rebuilt according to the original structure of the place before the ruinous quake, most of the neoclassical and Venetian architectural influences that once typified the original Town have never been recuperated – only a couple of churches survived the disaster and are still commemorating the historical heritage of the island today.



Fig. 4 – Venetian Church on Solomos Sq.

In practice, after 1953, Zakynthos Town had to be rebuilt from scratch. The immediate concerns at that time were to provide shelter as fast as possible for the families that had been deprived of their everything. In order to meet these needs, hundreds of tents and prefabricated houses were set up in the months following the quake. Although these were meant to be a temporary solution, many of these prefabricated houses – that have by now been upgraded with brick walls and concrete foundations – are still used as regular dwellings today. Overall, in the years following the quake, the reconstruction of Zakynthos Town occurred hastily and without guided planning, in a situation in which construction permits were handed out somewhat laxly so long as one had the land and the money for it. That this was tolerated in the aftermath of a disaster is somewhat understandable. However, it is a bit more perplexing to realize that this – in the absence of a Town planning department – pretty much continues to be the way further growth of Zakynthos Town is fictionally managed today.

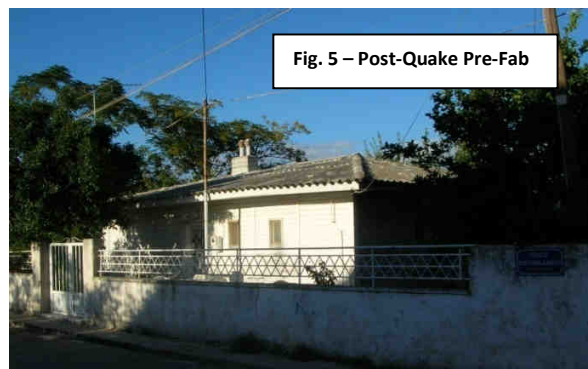


Fig. 5 – Post-Quake Pre-Fab

One only has to take a stroll through the streets of Zakynthos Town to observe a rather chaotic building pattern, besides a strikingly unaesthetic appearance of the existing – often unfinished – constructions. Aside from a deficiency in practical planning of Zakynthos Town, perhaps even more worrying is that – lacking appropriate forms of institutionalized control and inspection – many project developers on Zakynthos are able to get away with not abiding by the specific building regulations, particularly the more complex and costly measures that have been imposed to guarantee safety in areas of seismic activity. In other occasions, building permits are handed out without first analyzing the physical features of the land that is intended to be developed: ensuing landslides and/or soil erosions end up causing heated disputes between

neighbors. In reality, it appears that Zakynthos Town has become a dense accumulation of randomly scattered dwellings that all too often present fairly poor conditions all together.

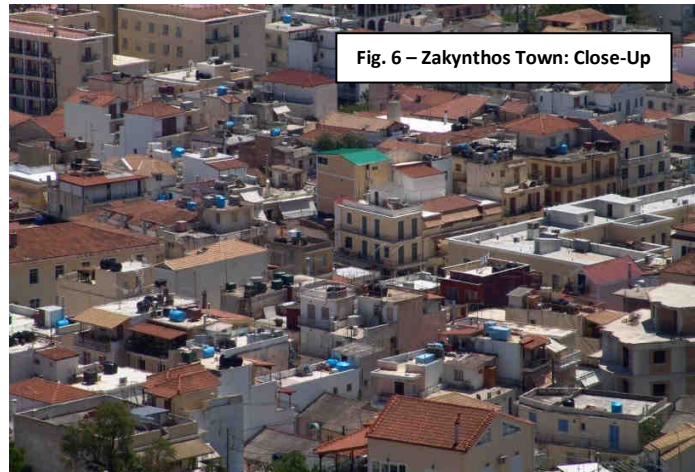


Fig. 6 – Zakynthos Town: Close-Up

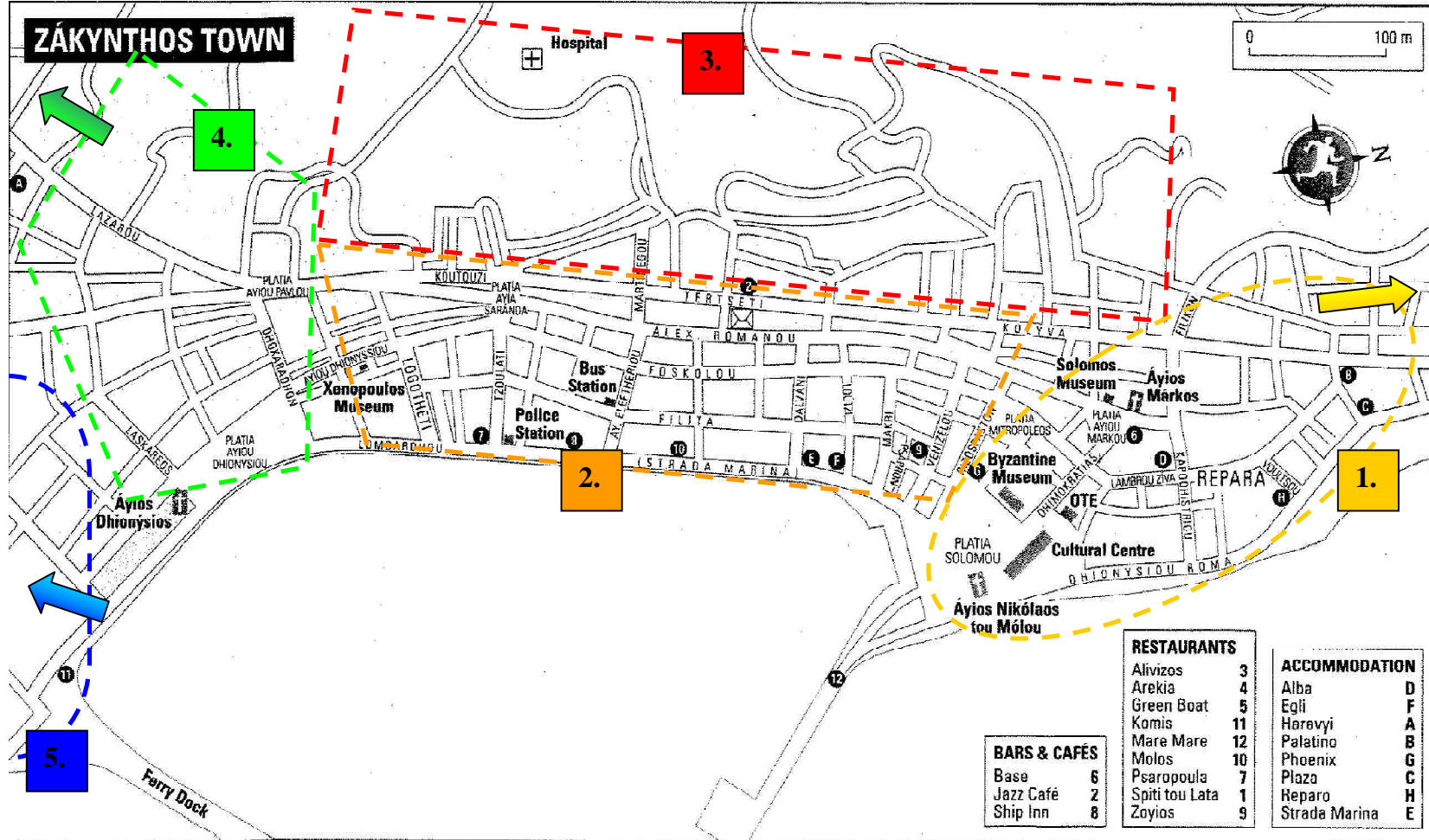
In fact, despite the continuous growth of Zakynthos Town, there is, up until this day, no separate department in the municipality or in the prefecture that specifically deals with its development and planning. Instead, its growth is simply regulated by the Prefecture through the local application procedures for construction permits. Due to the geographical features of Zakynthos Town, further constructing is physically limited in the north, so most new developments are taking place in its southern half – especially between Agios Dionysios Sq. and the Charalambos river, but also in the area between Lazarou str. and the hospital. Hence, Zakynthos Town is progressively sprawling inland.

Home ownership on Zakynthos appears to be comparatively elevated. Accurate data is (once again) lacking, but according to local authorities and real estate agencies it would be fair to estimate home ownership on the island of Zakynthos at a minimum of 80-85%, which is even higher than the national 75% average of Greece. Apparently only a relatively small proportion of inhabitants on the island are renting the property they inhabit, and a large share of the 15-20% of the total population of the island that qualifies as a renter is actually living in Zakynthos Town, leaving home ownership on the rest of the island and in the smaller villages to cover almost a complete 100% of the dwellings.

Despite the fact that some statistical records indicate the presence of subsidized housing on Zakynthos¹⁶, nobody at the municipality or the prefecture of Zakynthos was able to provide me with additional information upon this matter. As far as the local authorities on Zakynthos are concerned, it seems there is no social housing on the island – people either own their house or they pay rent out of their own pockets, as simple as that. Since rental subsidies in Greece are related to a person's employment record (and the years of contribution that were paid in forms of so-called social stamps) I also turned to the IKA to see if they could tell me more, and the reply I got there was *"this all goes thru Athens... rental subsidies go straight between the citizen and the ministries in Athens, you should go there and ask, we don't know anything about that here..."*. Unfortunately, time lacked to further investigate this. Nonetheless, the utter unawareness on behalf of local authorities and welfare officials was reason enough for me to assume that there was not going to be a significant amount of, or any, subsidized housing in Zakynthos Town.

¹⁶ See for example the relevant figures for 2001 by the Athena Database, available on www.statistics.gr

Map 4 – ‘Neighborhoods’ of Zakynthos Town



1) Center 2) Commercial District 3) 'The Hills' 4) Lazarou 5) Charalambos River

Commonly, locals differentiate various areas within Town by naming them according to the church, the square, or the main attraction that they surround. I turned to several local real estate agents to get a feel for the housing market of Zakynthos Town. They explained the average sizes, costs and facilities of the houses in Town; helped me conceptualize the functions and the value of the dwellings in different areas; and laid out their vision of the 'good' and 'bad' neighborhoods in Town. This information served to be able to distinguish 5 separate 'districts' within Zakynthos Town on the basis of certain commonalities in terms of functions, sizes, prices, conditions, and social composition of the respective dwellings. Each of these so-called neighborhoods is generically also associated with a certain stereotyped image. An approximate representation of the placement and borders of these 'constructed neighborhoods' is provided on Map 4, where arbitrarily colored circles portray the various areas of Town that share a set of common features¹⁷:

1) CENTER

Solomos Square – where one finds the Municipal Library and the Museum of Solomos – is what people consider to be the heart of Zakynthos Town. The area surrounding Solomos sq. and St. Marco Square is referred to as the **Kentro** (center) of the *Hora*. It is in this district that we find the offices of the main local authorities, including those of the Town Hall and the Prefecture. Also, the coffeeshops on St. Marco Square have been a central meeting spot for the gentry since the times of the Venetian occupation. Today, Solomos sq. and St. Marco sq. both remain important gathering points not merely for members of the upper classes but for all of Zakynthian society.

The centrality of this part of Town, its accessibility to main attractions and services, along with its historical legacy, have led the costs of the dwellings here to be amongst the priciest of the entire Town. The price for renting an apartment in this part of Town ranges somewhere in between 500 and 900 Euro on average, depending on the exact size and location. Moreover, it generally presents dwellings with a considerable size (an average of about 100 sq. meters per house, with 3 to 4 bedrooms), which makes it an attractive residential area for families with children as well and allows for greater competition.

An overwhelming majority of the residences here are occupied by native Zakynthians – besides perhaps a moderate number of British citizens, only very few foreigners seem to be living in this specific part of Town. Curiously enough however, it is also the part of Town where, according to several real estate agents, there is the largest proportion of Zakynthians renting their accommodation. Whereas locals generally own the property they inhabit in other parts of Town, to be able to live in this area of Town many locals are forced to resort to renting as there is little change in property owners over the years (i.e. multiple buildings remain in the hands of a selected group of families).

¹⁷ Please notice I used dashed circles on purpose on the map so as to illustrate that the boundaries of these so-called 'neighborhoods' are not undisputable or officially established! Also, the sizes, prices and social compositions mentioned here of the dwellings in various parts of Town are broad averages and thereby do not exclude the presence of significant exceptions to the general rule!

2) COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

Like any other town, Zakynthos Town too has several shopping streets, which, together, could be seen as constituting a small **Commercial District**. Besides public services such as the local Courthouse, the post office, the police station, and the KTEL (public transportation service), it is in the streets parallel to Strada Marina (in particular in Filita, Foskolou, Alexandrou Roma, and Tertseti streets) that one will most successfully shop for fine consumer goods on the island, from shoes to jewelry to televisions.

According to several real estate agents, overall, the houses in this part of Town tend to be fairly small in size (on average about 70-80 sq. meters, with 2 or maximum 3 bedrooms) and in more than one occasion not exactly in the best conditions: many buildings are known not to respect the seismic safety measures as they were hastily built after the destructive quake, and for some unexplainable reason the sewage system is often reported to clog in this part of town. This leads to fairly frequent water cuts, often accompanied by even more inconvenient power interruptions.

Nonetheless, the availability of daily services and the proximity to the Kentro means this area is very much in vogue to live in, especially for young starters or childless couples who work in the service industry.

“These people don’t mind living in a bit smaller of a place, they don’t necessarily want a lot of space you know, they’re more interested in having a periptero outside their house and a kafeneio round the corner. Here you find everything you need for your day to day business, and you are not far from the main square...the only more serious problem here is maybe parking...with all the shops it is not always very easy to find a place to leave your car, but ok, they all have a papaki...”

(Zakynthian real estate agent)

Consequently, rental prices in this part of Town have steadily been increasing over the past couple of years: the average minimum lays around ca. 350-400 Euro a month for a 2-3 bedroom apartment, but the maximum can now easily reach up to 700-800 Euros for a slightly larger apartment that has somewhat been restored with improved facilities.

3) ‘THE HILLS’

The third neighborhood I chose to call **‘the Hills’** because of its geographical location on the hilly side of Town. This area presents mixed features with regard to its social composition and the average quality of the dwellings, but it stands united with respect to its main function, as it is composed of purely residential dwellings for the most part.

On the one hand, a few large and impressive houses with spectacular views have been erected in this area, especially around the theatre on the northern side of the neighborhood

that borders with the so-called *Kentro*. On the other hand, moving away from the part close to the *Kentro* and heading south towards *Lazarou*, it becomes increasingly noticeable how numerous small residences (of about 60-70 sq. meters max) cramped into so-called 'polykatikies' (i.e. apartment buildings) actually predominate in this neighborhood. On a more positive note, the quality of the dwellings in this part is generally considered to be better than other areas of Town as it is composed of relatively newer constructions – word is that the odds of finding a place with somewhat decent plumbing, safe electricity wiring, and possibly even with central heating are higher in this neighborhood than in any other part of Town.

The social composition of this part of Town is rather diverse. Its dwellings are inhabited by a mix of young starters, middle aged families as well as elderly people, who could be of either Greek or foreign descent. Allegedly, the general rule in this area is that prices increase moving from south to north, and “*the higher your budget, the closer you are going to be able to live to the center*”. It is therefore not all that surprising to see how most 'foreign' residents of this neighborhood, and then especially non-European citizens, are to be found in the southern part of the Hills where the average rent of an apartment lies at around 300-350 Euro a month. Instead, as one moves north in this neighborhood, towards the center, average rental prices can easily reach up to 500-700 Euros a month.

4) LAZAROU ('ALBANOPOLIS')

The fourth neighborhood – which shall here be called after its main avenue *Lazarou* to keep things simple – stretches from Agios Dyonisios square to beyond Ag. Lazarou Street, and extends into the south western edge of Town.

The present function of the dwellings in this neighborhood is mixed between providing spaces for commercial businesses, offices, and residential accommodations. To a certain extent, it could be considered as an extension of the commercial district, with plentiful of grocery stores, mini-markets and handyman repair shops, but also other daily services such as hairdressers, tailors, or internet cafés for example. At the same time, it is a dynamic residential quarter as well; one where there is a considerable amount of tearing down and reconstructing going on, aiming to present a more structurally sound – not to mention aesthetically pleasing – picture of this part of Town in a few years time.

Yet, as it is more removed from the center, rental prices for housing accommodations in this area are generally lower than in the previous neighborhoods. For 200 Euro min and 300-400 Euros maximum one can find an average sized apartment with 2-3 decent sized bedrooms.

All in all, this is an area that is undergoing noticeable changes as it is slowly but steadily expanding inland. A significantly contributing factor to the neighborhood's expansion is the recent arrival of more and more foreigners on the island of Zakynthos and their choice to settle in this specific part of Town.

“More and more Albanians have come to live in this part of Town over the past 5-10 years... I think soon you won't find any Greeks here anymore....foreigners are coming in and taking over certain areas of town, you know like in America, they got China Town and stuff... eh, here we have our very own Albanopolis, cool isn't it?!” (Ironic tone!)

(Zakynthian Real Estate Agent)

5) St. CHARALAMBOS RIVER (INDUSTRIAL AREA)

The 5th neighborhood to be identified is that surrounding **St. Charalambos River**, which begins just behind the main port of the island and then follows the line of the river inland, reaching until the most outer southern fringe of Town. This part of Zakynthos Town could, to a certain extent, be referred to as the 'industrial area', as it is here that the old toy factory was once located (which is nowadays no longer there) and it is here that we find several silos where much of the storage and processing of the olives and wine-grapes destined for export still takes place today.

Besides the not so attractive surroundings (a dirty canal is not exactly considered the most charming view), the generally low value of the dwellings here is also a reflection of their poor conditions. It is in fact in this part of Town that we can still hit upon many of the prefab houses that have been maintained ever since the 1953 earthquake.

As a result of the above mentioned aspects combined, this part of Town has, by and large, become the least desirable area of the entire town to live in. As a matter of fact, unless someone's family has been living in this part of Town for several generations, or unless there is simple no other option due to financial difficulties, local Zakynthians these days apparently avoid searching for any accommodation in this particular part of Town. In view of such relative scarcity of demand, this neighborhood has come to present the lowest prices on the housing market – rental prices for medium-sized apartments are at an average of about 200 Euros.

“...the area around the canal is not considered an attractive neighborhood to live in at all. Actually, there are A LOT of houses for sale here at the moment. It is as though more and more people want to get rid of any real estate they possess in this part of Town, anticipating the fact that soon their land or houses here will be worth even less. It takes a long time for me to be able to sell any houses here, it's quite difficult to be honest – even when the asking price is extremely low, I just can't find any buyers...nobody really wants to live here you know... if people choose to live in Town they want to live in or around the center, otherwise they go and live out in one of the villages nearby... one or the other... But here it is nothing; it is not inside the city or out in the countryside...”

(Zakynthian Real Estate Agent)

PART V: ALBANIAN HOUSING in ZAKYNTHOS TOWN

This particular chapter deals with the economic, political and social aspects of migrant integration that relate to a specific interpretation of housing. Here, the prime focus lies on the semi-structured interviews with Albanian immigrants in the attempt to illustrate the way they experience their housing situation in Zakynthos Town.

A. GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

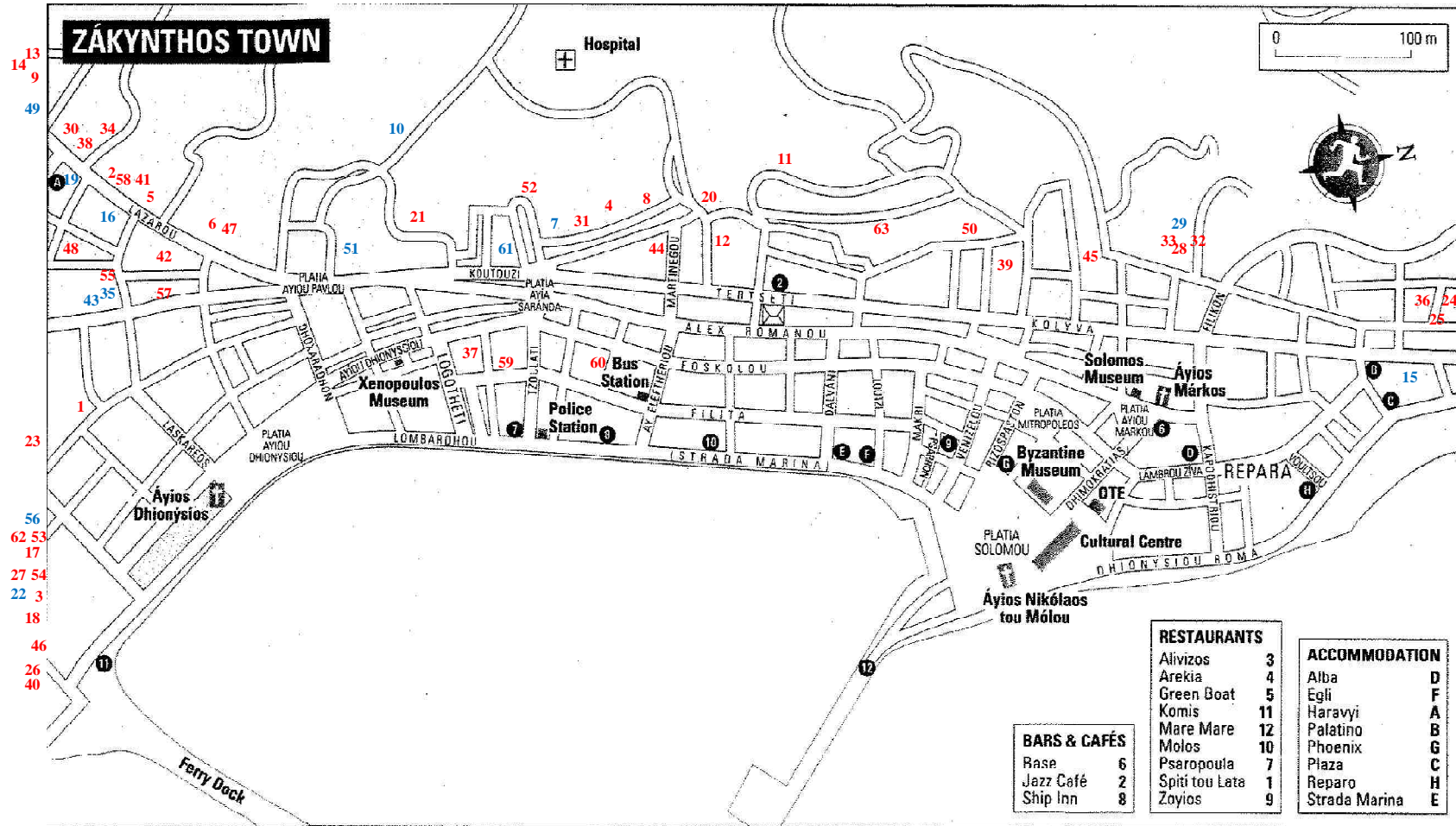
To maintain the privacy of the interviewees and respect their general desire for anonymity, the exact addresses (= street and nr.) matching the Albanian individuals that were interviewed shall not be disclosed here, nor will their real names be used (*an appendix of the interviewees can be found in Annex II*). That said, we shall now discuss the answers provided by the Albanian interviewees to the following set of questions:

- Do you rent or own the house you live in? How much do you pay for rent?
- How did you go about finding a place to stay? Were you ever refused (on grounds of your nationality) when looking for housing?
- Do you work in your own neighborhood? If not, how far away do you work?
- Are you satisfied with your neighborhood? (i.e. location / services?)

RENT VS. OWNERSHIP

Map 5 illustrates the locations of the housing accommodation of the Albanian interviewees in Zakynthos Town. Unfortunately, this map, like any other I have found of Zakynthos Town, does not portray the entire Town, especially the area that is expanding into the south west. That is why several cases have not been placed on the map with accurate precision but have instead been located on the border of the map according to the neighborhood that they were part of. Of the 63 interviewees, 13 persons (8 men and 5 women) merely mentioned either the area or the street in which they lived as they preferred not to reveal their precise address – an approximation of the housing location of these cases are indicated with blue numbers on the map.

Map 5 – Location Housing Albanian Interviewees



As can be seen from Map 5, the residences of the Albanian migrants were mainly scattered over 3 of the 5 neighborhoods that were outlined earlier - in 3) The Hills, in 4) Lazarou and in 5) Charalambos river area. This is not to exclude the presence of Albanians in other parts of town, as it is in fact possible to find Albanians living in all parts of Town, yet the majority of the research subjects definitely resided in one of these 3 specific areas of Town. Merely 3 research subjects lived in the so-called commercial district, while 4 interviewees resided in the center of Zakynthos Town (of which 3 were part of the same family and shared the same house).

Almost the entire sample of interviewees was renting their housing: 62 of the 63 interviewees stated they were renting their accommodation. Table 1 shows how – despite the fact that most of the interviewees were married and living on the island with their families, thereby showing a long-term intention to settle on the island – in comparison to the respective figures for the Zakynthian population as regards home-ownership on the island, there appears to be a striking difference between Albanian immigrants and locals.

Table 1 – Home Ownership vs. Rentals

	% Renting Current Housing	% Owning Current Housing
Albanian Sample	98.4% (62/63)	1.6% (1/63)
Zakynthian Average	± 15%	± 85%

In general, the interviewees were renting their accommodation for two reasons in particular. First and foremost, they could simply not afford it to purchase their own house, and second, especially amongst the single men of the sample, it was not excluded they would move back to Albania sooner or later, or just out of Zakynthos/Greece:

“I don’t have the money to buy my own house here yet, so yea, I have to rent one... For the moment I have no other choice really... Besides, if I ever have the money to buy a house I would first build one in Albania for my family...only after I would think of buying a house here...”

(Interviewee nr. 23)

“I’ve been here almost 10 years now... I’d like to buy a house, but I don’t know if I ever will here on Zakynthos...I am not sure I want to stay here forever...”

(Interviewee nr. 33)

The rental prices paid by Albanian interviewees varied, and not every interviewee revealed how much they actually paid. The price ranges are stated in the table below, where a distinction has been made between the price of an individual rent and that of a household of 2 or more persons (most of which had double incomes as well though!).

Table 2 – Rental Prices paid by Interviewees

Monthly Rent (in Euros)	# of Individuals	# of Households
< 100	13	-
100 ≤ 200	12	2
200 ≤ 300	3	10
300 ≤ 400	-	13
Unknown		9
Total		62

As far as what the interviewees revealed, whereas the lowest rent was less than a 100 Euro, there was nobody – single or married – that paid more than 400 Euros rent! Besides, overall, rental prices paid by the interviewees were fairly standardized all over Town: any variation in the rental prices did not necessarily suggest they got to live more or less centrally – i.e. the highest rental prices were not necessarily related to dwellings in more central areas. Also, the length of the stay on the island of the interviewees did not appear to be related to a significant increase or decrease of rental prices: i.e. some cases paid higher proportionate rental prices even though they had been on Zakynthos since less years than others and vice versa.

There was one noticeable exception of an Albanian immigrant that was living in an apartment with his family that he owned himself in the area here referred to as the Hills. This particular case was an Albanian man who evidently manifested his desire to permanently settle in Zakynthos: he left Albania in his early twenties, had been on Zakynthos since 1997, began to work in construction, is now running a little but successful construction company, and finally managed to regularize his entire family on the island last year (interviewee nr. 8). However, he also said that in order to purchase the house he had to put his business up as a mortgage guarantee, so that:

“...if my business goes bad, I lose my house...and I won’t have anything anymore...”

(Interviewee nr. 8)

THE SEARCH

Interviewees were also asked how they managed to find their home on Zakynthos; i.e. whether they did it on their own forces, if they received any help at all, and in case, who they were helped by.

A considerable number of interviewees mentioned they received some assistance from fellow Albanians on Zakynthos. The kind of help they received from other Albanian immigrants, however, came in various forms. Remarkably, a fairly large number of the Albanian interviewees claimed they had nobody they already knew to turn to when they arrived on Zakynthos. These cases were simply provided with useful information by other Albanians – where to search for cheap housing, how to search for it, etc. – and had no choice but to find themselves a place to stay as soon as possible. Instead, a more selected few got specific contact details from relatives/ acquaintances of people (locals or Albanians) who had something out for rent.

“...I came to Zakynthos to work for mr. X (landlord) so the first years here I was living with him, my brother was there too... he [the landlord] had an sort of stable a bit further away from his house, he had split it up in a few rooms with 2 beds in each, and there was a small shower for all of us... After some years though I left that place, I changed of job and so I had to look for a place of my own. I had no idea how to find a place to stay; I had never had to look for a house here... Luckily, my brother knew somebody that was living in an apartment in Town with a few others, and as they still had enough room to fit another person, they proposed for me to go live with them...”

(Interviewee nr. 56)

However, rather strikingly, not many interviewees mentioned they had stayed over at a relative's or friend's house as guests during the time that they were still searching to find a house on their own. Besides, even if they stayed with family or friends just temporarily, they often gave them a financial compensation:

“When I first arrived here I stayed with my brother and my sister-in-law for a while... For a few weeks I was allowed to stay with them without paying anything... but then as soon as I started working on a regular basis, my brother started asking me to give him a little contribution for the rent. I stayed with them for another 2 months and then I moved out... If it is to pay rent, at least I want to live on my own terms...”

(Interviewee nr. 10)

In fact, generally, any assistance offered to newly arriving Albanian immigrants by other Albanians seemed to be limited to practical matters: once it had been explained to them how things worked on Zakynthos they were expected to sort themselves out:

"...when I came here I had nobody to help me out... but I managed... eh the same goes for the rest... Everybody manages somehow; it is just a matter of activating... I am not going to look for a house for somebody else, they know best what they are looking for and how much they are willing to pay for it... I can suggest certain places, but I cannot do more than that now can I?!"

(Interviewee nr. 40)

The theoretical framework of this research mentioned the fact that is not all that unusual for Albanians to be discriminated on the housing market in Greece. In view hereof, interviewees were also asked about their relevant experiences during their search for housing on Zakynthos so as to figure out if they had ever been denied an accommodation in a particular neighborhood merely because of their Albanian nationality. Eventually, this specific issue was discussed in greater detail with 56 persons during the interviews. To my surprise, only 7 of these people claimed their nationality had indeed somewhat caused them increased difficulties in finding a house.

"Once, I had made an appointment with the owner of a house that was for rent, and as soon as he realized I was Albanian, all of a sudden he tells me he had already promised to rent the house to somebody else!"

(Interviewee nr. 30)

"...Sometimes, when they see you're from Albania, they ask you to pay, kserw ego, something like 4-5 months of rent in advance... a lot of money anyway! And they may increase the price of rent, because they're afraid you are going to break something..."

(Interviewee nr. 63)

"...I saw an ad for some house but then when I called [the landlord] to see how much they asked for rent and all that, since I do not speak Greek well, they heard I was not from here and bam, the house was not available anymore...some people just hung up on you...!...in the end it was my boss who found me a place to stay..."

(Interviewee nr. 46)

While this shows that discrimination of some Albanians on the housing market is not inexistent in Zakynthos Town, it also suggests that there were other Albanians that actually found the place they were living in through a local Zakynthian acquaintance. In fact, while some locals perhaps refuse to rent out their place to an Albanian, luckily enough there are others that do seem to be willing to help them find a place:

“Where I live now it’s the wife of my boss that found me... she’s a good person... she knows me... I worked for my boss for many years... and one day she came up to me and said that she knew of somebody renting out a nice apartment near to Ag. Lazarou for a good price ... she knew I was here on Zakynthos with my family too and said she would put in a good word for me with the landlord of that apartment... very nice lady... thanks to here we live in an apartment in the center now instead of being out of Town!”

(Interviewee nr. 24)

Overall, it did not appear as though there were extreme forms of discrimination. Nobody ever mentioned seeing any explicit signs banning Albanians from renting certain places, nor did many interviewees claim that they had been denied a house because of their specific nationality. Instead, the research subjects seemed to suggest that it was more simply a matter of being foreign or not: Compared to locals, a differential treatment applied to all foreigners, whether you were from Albania or not did not really matter:

“Yea sometimes when they hear that you are not from here they become a bit more suspicious...They start asking for all sorts of guarantees, you have to pay a large deposit before they even consider renting their house out to you... But once you’ve paid the deposit and you show that you are correct person that is going to pay the rent regularly, they do not have a problem normally....they just want to be sure that you are not going to take off from one day to the next without paying...”

(Interviewee nr. 31)

LOCATION HOUSING VS. EMPLOYMENT

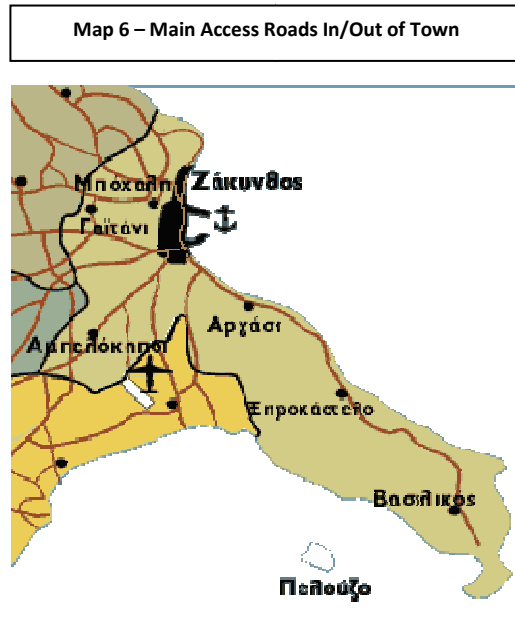
Of all the interviewees, more than half mentioned they were not working in the neighborhood they were living in. This is perhaps not too surprising of a discovery considering the fact that many Albanians of the sample were males who were employed in construction or agriculture – both the kind of activities that are not necessarily concentrated on the inside of a town. Of those males employed in the service industry, only one person lived and worked in the same area of Town (interviewee nr. 22).

Nevertheless, the three neighborhoods that present high rates of Albanian immigrant housing (the Hills, River Area, and Lazarou) are all located on the outer fringes of Zakynthos Town, near to main roads leading into the provinces of Arkadion and Alykon (which are intensifying tourist areas) in the north, and to those of Laganas (tourist/construction heaven), Artemision and Vassilikos (where a lot of agriculture takes place) in the south. It thus seems the housing location of Albanian migrants, although perhaps not always deliberately chosen for this purpose, does actually facilitate an easy access to the location of their employment.

“I work in construction, so it’s not like I ever work in my neighborhood anyway... I have colleagues picking me up in the morning at the corner of my house and from there we go wherever we have to be... easy... we do not even have to go through the morning rush in the center like that...”

(Interviewee nr. 34)

It is most noticeable though how the male Albanians that are living in Town and working in the agricultural sector tend to be Albanians that have been on the island since quite a while and have managed to gather enough capital to move out of the stables or accommodations that the agricultural landowners usually provide for them (unless they are related to somebody that has been on Zakynthos for a long time and they moved in with the rest of their families who had managed to establish themselves over time).



“It’s only 2 years that I live in Town. When I was here alone I was living there where I work, with my boss. Then my wife came to Zakynthos, so I had to find a house, we could not stay together where I was living before... I put some money aside all those years, I purchased a car, and decided to come live in Town...I have to get up earlier to go to work, but here my wife too can do something, there’s shops and stuff, and it’s safer than out in the country...”

(Interviewee nr. 47)

Amongst the females, employment in their own neighborhoods was higher than amongst the males: 4 female interviewees stated they both lived and worked in the same neighborhood of Town (interviewee nr. 7, nr. 16, nr. 38, and nr. 39). Besides, the large majority of them were working in the service industry within the borders of Zakynthos Town. The main reason here for was the fact that they could not easily travel greater distances on the island as they did not have an individual means of transportation, while public transport on the island is fairly scarce and unreliable, especially in winter.

“I could have had a job as a waitress in Laganas, in one of the restaurants on the main road there, you know, where all the tourists go... I have a friend who works there during the summer and she said if I wanted she could ask her boss if I could come work in the same place too. But I cannot take the bus to lagana to go and come back every day; it takes a long time from the Hora! Besides, my husband wouldn’t even let me... Late at night, out on the streets, especially in Laganas, with all those drunken men...eh, no...”

(Interviewee nr. 16)

Merely one woman worked outside of Zakyntos Town in the area of Vassilikos, but she also mentioned that the reason that was possible was because her husband worked in the same area and was able to give her a ride to work every day:

“My husband works for mr. X [local landlord] in Vassilikos. It is through him that I found this job at the mini-market... They always go and get their drinks there during their break... there are some tables they can sit at... One day, talking to the shop owner, he found out that he was looking for somebody to help him in the shop. So he suggested me... the shop owner knows my husband for many years now, so he was ok with me working there... It’s been 4 years now that I am working there... I drive to work together with my husband, he always drops me off in the mornings, we both have to be there early. On the way back he sometimes picks me up, but often I have to get the bus... He usually works longer days than me so instead of waiting I go with the bus, or I get a ride from my boss every now and then when he has to go into Town...”

(Interviewee nr. 5)

SATISFACTION WITH NEIGHBORHOOD

Generally, the level of satisfaction with the location of one’s housing was not necessarily related to the centrality of their housing, to the length of their stay, or to the whether they were a part of family or single. As regards these 3 features – the interviewees were quite equally (dis)satisfied with the neighborhood they lived in.

On the whole, despite the growing congregation of Albanian immigrants in what are considered to be some of the least desired and most shabby neighborhoods of Zakyntos Town, the overwhelming majority of the interviewees did not actually object to the location of their housing with respect to the surrounding neighborhood. When asked about their level of contentment with the location and the facilities provided by the neighborhood they were living in, the large majority of the interviewees showed to be fairly pleased: 52 people out of 61 people with whom this question was discussed gave positive answers overall, while the remaining 9 were generally neutral about this issue.

“...There’s everything I need in my neighborhood... there are supermarkets; there’s a fruit and vegetable store; there’s periptera; there’s several coffee shops and grill rooms; there’s a pharmacy... I have everything nearby...”

(Interviewee nr. 35)

“Eh ok so I do not have a periptero right at the corner of my house, but if I just walk a few streets further down I’m right in the center of Town... In the streets around me maybe there’s not a lot of shops, but you can find anything you need if you just go a little bit further... This Town is not so big you know, with my papaki it takes me 2 minutes to get to the shopping street and 5 minutes to get to the other side of Town... I’ve done it by foot also; nothing is really far here...”

(Interviewee nr. 3)

“...We are not so close to the center center here...but ok, it’s not far either! Besides, it is fine...no? I like it. It is generally quiet... not too many cars come into the little street we live in... It is good for my children also, they can play outside without having to worry about cars running over them because the street is so small that people have to slow down to pass without hitting the other cars... It can be that this is not the prettiest area of Town, but ok, I think it is still nice, it has space and tranquility...”

(Interviewee nr. 51)

As a matter of fact, essentially – regardless of the area they lived in – none of the interviewees suggested that their dissatisfaction with their neighborhood was such that it would constitute reason enough for them to move to another area.

“...The only reason I would maybe one day move out of my neighborhood is that my boss lives a few streets further down and I have the feeling that wherever I go I run into him...as if he is always checking on me, I don’t know...but I don’t like that anyway... for the rest though I like my neighborhood and I do not think I’m going to be moving anywhere else soon...I’ve moved enough already on this island since I arrived, now I found my place, I live with good people, I have several friends living close to me, and in general I find it is a good location... if only my boss would not be around all the time...”

(Interviewee nr. 21)

B. MATERIAL FORM

Besides asking the interviewees where and why they were living in a certain neighborhood rather than another, several questions concerning the structural state of their house were also posed so as to try and visualize the conditions within which the Albanian immigrants were living. These included:

- Can you describe your house? (# rooms, sq. meters, facilities, etc.)_Who do you live with in this property?
- Are you satisfied with the quality of your housing? (Amount of space, furnishing, etc.)
- Considering the location and the state of your house, are you generally content with your living conditions on this island?

ALBANIAN VS. LOCAL HOUSING STANDARDS

To be able to assess the level of contentment of the Albanians with the state of the dwellings they resided in, I first asked my interviewees to describe the house they were living in, seeking to find out the answer to a number of categorical questions concerning specific basic features of their houses. These included:

- Sq. meters of living space/rooms?
- Kitchen?
- Bathroom?
- Warm water?
- Heating?

The Athena Database results of 2001 were used to put the relevant data of the housing conditions of Albanians on Zakynthos into perspective with the average local standards (*see Annex IV*). When comparing the answers Albanians provided to these questions to the respective average Zakynthian standards, which are summarized in Table 3, the general picture that comes out is that on average, Albanians are generally living in dwellings that are either below or very much below the average standards of the island!

Table 3 – Facilities Available in Dwellings

<i>Albanian Research Sample:</i>				<i>Zakynthian Average:</i>	
	Yes	No	Unknown	Yes	No
Kitchen	76.2% (48/63)	20.6% (13/63)	3.2% (2/63)	98.2%	1.8%
Bathroom	87.3% (55/63)	9.5% (6/63)	3.2% (2/63)	95.2%	4.8%
Warm Water (*)	58.7% (37/63)	38.1% (24/63)	3.2% (2/63)	± 85%	± 15%
Heating	3.2% (2/63)	88.9% (56/63)	7.9% (5/63)	37.9%	62.1%

(*) Estimated local averages applying to Zakynthos Town only.

The average sizes of the houses of the Albanian interviewees varied, but there was nobody who claimed to have more than ca. 90 sq. meters of living space (not even the homeowner), or to be living in a house with more than 4 bedrooms. The majority of the interviewees replied their house was somewhere in between 40 and 60 sq. meters. Several cases, all of them single individuals, mentioned it was less than 20sq. meters they were living on. Instead, a few households stated they lived in houses that were between 70 and 90 sq. meters. However, regarding the average amount of space/rooms the interviewees had to their disposal, it is fairly hard to make any concluding comments as it was often ambiguous with how many people they actually shared whatever space they had. In fact, when asked how many people they shared their roof with, remarkably, not one interviewee mentioned they were living on their own. Male or female, single or married, everybody was living in one form of cohabitation or another with other people. Single males typically lived with 4 to 6 persons; usually on less than 40 sq. meters! Instead, the familiar households generally had 1-2 bedrooms; occasionally 3 depending on the members, and only very rarely 4. Still, regardless of the uncertainty of the exact amount of individual living space the interviewees had, in comparison to the average sizes of local dwellings – where most houses appear to have either 4 or 5 rooms (see Table 4) – it is evident that the Albanians are generally living in smaller accommodations.

Table 4 – Average Size of Dwellings on Zakynthos: # Rooms

	1 room	2 rooms	3 rooms	4 rooms	≥ 5 rooms
Zakynthian Average (*)	2.3%	8.8%	22.1%	33.9%	32.8%

(*) These figures relate to the entire island, and not specifically to Zakynthos Town. (Estimates of average sizes for Zakynthos Town were roughly described earlier). It is indeed likely that the dwellings within a town are generally smaller than those in the more remote and deserted areas of the island. Nevertheless, the figures presented in this table remain average indicators of the local living standards.

SATISFACTION WITH HOUSING QUALITY

After the description of their housing accommodation, an important question during the interviews with regard to understanding the way the research subjects actually experience their housing situation was to find out the extent to which they were satisfied with the quality of their accommodation.

Considering the fact that, as we saw earlier, Albanian migrants in Zakynthos Town are generally placed in houses that are worse off than the average Zakynthian accommodation, the level of contentment with the quality of their housing could have been far lower than it turned out to be. Nevertheless, whereas it was previously shown how most Albanian immigrants residing in Zakynthos Town, despite their growing aggregation in particular peripheral areas of Town, do not really mind the location of their housing, a larger number of them do in fact critically complain about the actual quality and state of their accommodation. Nevertheless, to a certain extent, there were noticeable variations in the appreciation for the inhabited dwellings between diverse forms of households with different expectations.

Albanian interviewees – families as well as single individuals – frequently mentioned too little living space as a complaint concerning the state of their residence:

“... I wish we had another room... now my son is sleeping on a couch in the living room, you know, one of those extendable things... But we only have one bedroom at home... if we decide to have more children we are going to have to look for a bigger place, like this is doesn't go... (etsi den paei)”

(Interviewee nr. 6)

“...we are 6 in the house... normally we are not all in at the same time so it is ok, but it sometimes happens that we are all there and then it becomes a bit tight...”

(Interviewee nr. 42)

Also, there did not appear to be a significant correlation between the price familiar households paid for their rent and the level of satisfaction with their housing quality. In other words, higher rent did not mean they would also necessarily get better housing conditions. Families could be paying more and be less satisfied, just as much as they could be paying less and be more satisfied. Instead, amongst the single interviewees, those who paid more rent were perhaps slightly more pleased as well because it suggested they were generally living with less people.

Still, another common complaint for single individuals as well as familiar households was the fact that Albanian immigrants did not feel they were getting value for their money – rent was often deemed to be disproportionately high:

“For what I get, I think it is a lot of money I pay... I share a room with another person; we’re 5 people living on not even 40 square meters or so... we do not have any furniture almost, which is alright because otherwise we would not even fit...but generally, it’s not a great house or anything...and all of us pay rent, so in total that’s a lot of money!”

(Interviewee nr. 13)

“I pay more than 400 Euros a month for rent, that’s a lot of money! At least the landlord could make sure everything is in order no?! But it is not like that! It’s been almost a month now that we’ve been having problems with hot water in the shower and I’ve asked him to come and look at it, and he keeps saying yes yes I’m coming, but then he never comes... I think he doesn’t want to pay for any reparations. If it is the solar panel that is broken it is going to cost him quite a bit of money... I’m almost sure that if he ever comes he is going to try and make us to pay for whatever needs to be fixed...!”

(Interviewee nr. 17)

The single men of the sample in general appeared to have less demands for their accommodation. They did not seem to mind living in houses that did not have a kitchen or even a bathroom, nor did they appear to be particularly upset about the fact that they did not always have hot water.

“All I need is a bed really... for the rest I don’t really care... I am never home anyway...”

(Interviewee nr. 61)

Instead, regarding the actual amenities and constructions of the houses, complaints were mainly issued by interviewees that were part of a larger household and not so much by single men. As a matter of fact, overall – perhaps due to the fact that they are generally spending more time within their residence than men – women seemed to be the ones worrying most about the structural state of their houses or its provisions, which were not always thought to be very sound in several cases:

“Every time there is an earthquake I’m scared the house I going to collapse...there’s more and more cracks in the walls...I asked my landlord to come and have a look at them after the last shake, but he says it’s only cracks in the paint... I think it’s something more serious than that though...”

(Interviewee nr. 7)

“...we have this really old stove at home, one of those gas plates that you just put on the counter, with a plug you know... I wish we had a proper kitchen, I do not really trust that thing... I always have to make sure I turn the gas off completely after using it, otherwise who knows, we might just die from a gas leak...!”

(Interviewee nr. 60)

Yet, on the whole, those households that had been on Zakynthos since a longer period of time appeared to be slightly more satisfied with the state of their housing. However, rather than implying that this also meant they paid higher amounts of rent, it seemed to merely suggest they had had the time to search and the opportunity to relocate into another accommodation that offered them relatively better housing conditions for a similar or lower price:

“...Before this we were living right behind the Church of Agios Dyonisios... but there we had a smaller house that was costing us more rent than what we are paying here, for an apartment with 4 bedrooms instead of 2! We stayed there for a couple of years... until we found another place... now, we’re still in the same area, but at least we pay less rent and our house is much nicer, bigger...”

(Interviewee nr. 41)

All together though, limited space, disproportionate rents, dodgy constructions, and all too basic amenities were some of the commonly repeated objections the Albanian interviewees mentioned with regard to their accommodations. Thus, the level of discontent amongst Albanian interviewees with the state of their housing indeed appears to be higher than with their neighborhood. Especially amongst the Albanians who were on Zakynthos with their families – thus showing greater intention to settle on the island – the criticisms on this specific issue were generally much more pronounced than amongst the single males, whose future permanence on the island was perhaps still ambiguous.

What all this tells us is that in certain occasions, the relatively poor housing conditions indeed appeared to be reason enough for interviewees to consider moving. Yet, with the amounts of rent that Albanian interviewees were paying, they should actually have been able to afford relatively decent housing conditions considering the average prices of the housing market in Zakynthos Town, especially since they were generally located in the cheaper areas of Town! Even single individuals who paid less than 100 Euro in rent typically shared their roof with more people, all of which paid their share of rent, adding up to a significant amount per dwelling. Albanian immigrants too seemed to be aware of this. Hence, they were generally very hesitant to spend even more money on rent. In general, it was as though they had a set budget for their housing situation – they gave what they gave: if this got them a nice house, good; if not, it would still do, for now at least. With time they then hoped to come across a better deal...

SATISFACTION GENERAL LIVING CONDITIONS

Research subjects were subsequently asked how they generally felt about their living conditions on the island of Zakynthos when combining both the quality and the location of their housing. Such a generic assessment helps to try and realize the way Albanians experience the entire housing situation, and allows for an understanding of the related aspects that matter most to them.

Remarkably, in spite of the complaints that have previously been mentioned, the responses provided by the sample regarding their overall level of contentment with their living conditions in terms of housing on the island were still predominantly positive!

“Eh ok, it could be better... but it could also be much worse! I think where we live is ok for now... It’s affordable; we can save up our money... And maybe one day we’ll be able to move to a nicer, bigger home...”

(Interviewee nr. 55)

“It’s not perfect, but it’s fine... I do not complain...”

(Interviewee nr. 26)

As a matter of fact, when asking the interviewees what they would want to change on Zakynthos to make their stay more pleasant, not one person suggested their housing situation was the most critical aspect of their continuation in this specific context!

“...it would be nice to live in a bigger house...or to buy my own place even... but what can I do? At the moment I have so many other things to sort out still that I don’t have the time or the energy to think about that really...”

(Interviewee nr. 2)

“...of all the things, where I live is the last of my concerns really...!”

(Interviewee nr. 44)

Astonishingly, all in all, notwithstanding any difficulties and objections in this field, the Albanian interviewees did not seem to place much weight on their housing situation in the respective judgments of their existence on Zakynthos!

C. 'LIVING' CONTEXT

– ECONOMIC ASPECTS –

So as to try and get an understanding of the average bargaining power of Albanian immigrants on the Zakynthian housing market, the Albanian research subjects in the sample were asked a set of specific questions that were geared towards a generic assessment of their level of economic integration on the island. The section that follows shall discuss the answers I received from my research subjects to the following questions:

- What job did you do in Albania? What are your qualifications? (Studies, specializations?)
- What job(s) do you do on this island? (past and present experiences) Do you think you are working below your qualifications?
- Do you consider your working conditions to be fair? (hours/week, pay, etc.) Do you feel you are treated equally to Greek people in your working environment?
- Do you struggle getting around with your budget? Do you manage to save anything? Do you think Albanians face greater financial struggles than Greeks on this island?

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY & QUALIFICATIONS

Research subjects were asked about their previous employment record back in Albania. Some reoccurring functions listed by the interviewees were those of painter, policeman, baker, plumber, technician, hairdresser, chef, truck-driver, schoolteacher, musician, carpenter and seamstress. Additionally, a few Albanians also mentioned how they had worked in prominent positions in finances, accountancy, health care, or even in architectural studios. However, there was also a significant number of Albanians of the research sample (5 men and 9 women) who suggested that they did not have regular forms of employment in Albania right before they came to Greece.

"...I did not really have a job in Albania...I come from a small village, there wasn't much to do, so I was just making some money here and there... That's why I came here...!"

(Interviewee nr. 15)

I studied architecture in Italy; I was there for 5 years... Then when I graduated I went back to Tirana...and I worked in an architectural studio there for almost a year... Things are starting to get rolling; there is work to do...! The problem though is that there is not enough money for it... but I did not want to go back to Italy, 5 years in Rome were enough for me... so in the meanwhile I decided to come here, make some money... Yea...before I was designing buildings... now, I am building them!"

(Interviewee nr. 4)

When asked whether they had specific specializations and/or degrees, the majority of the male research subjects (= 27 cases) replied they did not have academic degrees or specific job formations. This perhaps serves to explain why the majority of these interviewees also did not really seem to resent their position in the local labor market either, or complain about them working below their qualifications on Zakynthos.

"...It's maybe not what I always dreamed I would do in my life...but in Albania I had nothing... here, at least I can say I have a job...!"

(Interviewee nr. 1)

Nevertheless, amongst the women of the sample in particular, there was a significant proportion of interviewees (= 6 cases) that mentioned they were university graduates who had been forced to take on jobs in cleaning or waitressing on Zakynthos just so they would be able to make a minimum of an income. In fact, remarkably, several of these women, who tended to be the younger ones, had been to college during those years that their husbands had already gone abroad (to try and set up a life there before they brought the rest of their family over), obtaining degrees in accountancy, management, psychology, or languages. For example, one woman, who said she had a degree in the English language and in accountancy, explicitly mentioned how she had deliberately gone to university while waiting to join her husband because:

"I thought having a degree would give me more opportunities once I would be abroad. My parents do not have a lot of money, we come from a small town, yet they, together with my husband who sent money back from abroad, did everything they could for me to go to Tirana and get an education. In 3 years time I managed to obtain 2 degrees, one that would allow me to communicate with the rest of the world, and another that enabled me to work for any kind of business. Now that I'm here though, it turns out my degrees are worth absolutely nothing! Imagine, after all the effort s both my family and I put into this, all they think I'm capable of doing here is be a cleaning lady! When I tell people I went to university I have had it several times now that they would just laugh at me in my face in disbelief! Other times they would tell me I do not speak Greek well enough to actually make use of my degrees on this island...In general I think it's hard, they do not really give me a chance to prove myself here...Alla ti na kanoume eh?! Endometaksi tha prepei na kano opoia dipote douleia boro gia na ziso..."

(Interviewee nr. 50)

EMPLOYMENT ON ZAKYNTHOS

Of the 63 Albanian interviewees, 60 persons claimed they were working on the island of Zakynthos and making some form of individual financial income: only 3 women of the entire sample explicitly stated they were not employed at the time of the interview. However, of these 3 unemployed women, 1 was pregnant and 2 had just recently given birth. These numbers would imply that more than 95% of the subjects of the research sample – be it on a regular or an irregular basis – were in fact working!

Please notice, however, that such high employment figures are not necessarily representative of the general Albanian population in Zakynthos Town. As a matter of fact, these numbers need to be interpreted with caution as they are probably distorted by several elements, including: a) the snowballing technique was used to get in touch with more research subjects, and many Albanians knew each other because they had or were working together, b) ‘working’ for the research subjects meant making money, whether that was through an officially registered form of employment or not was often considered to be a question of (unelaborated) detail.

Table 5. Occupational Sectors of Albanian Workforce According to Gender (*)

	MALE	FEMALE
Primary Economy (Agriculture)	25.53%	-
Secondary Economy (Construction)	63.83%	-
Tertiary Economy (Services)	10.64%	100%

(*) Figures based on research sample, excluding the unemployed Albanian interviewees.

The majority of the Albanian males of the sample were working in construction (out of the 47 males in the sample 30 men stated they were working primarily in construction = 63.83% of all males), followed by the agricultural sector (12 men said their main occupational activities were for agricultural holdings = 25.53% of all males). Only 5 men were working in various positions in the service sector (=10.64% of all males: one owned a restaurant, two were shop-assistants in a hardware store, one man was shop assistant in a beverage discount store, and one man was a club-bouncer). Instead, the females of the sample were exclusively engaged in the service industry (5 women were cleaning ladies in homes/hotels/supermarkets, 4 women were waitresses, 2 were caretakers of elderly/disabled people, one woman worked as a salesperson in a bakery, and one woman was a shop-assistant in a small grocery store).

Still, in a dual economy such as that of Zakynthos, the fact that the Albanian interviewees stated they were working does not yet allow us to conclude that they are also properly economically 'integrated'. In fact, the difficulty here was to find out how many Albanian research subjects were actually engaged in (un)registered forms of employment: 11 men (9 of which were employed in construction and 2 in agriculture) and 4 women (3 of which were employed as waitresses and 1 was a domestic help) openly admitted they did not have officially declared incomes. Moreover, fearing they would otherwise get in trouble, I also suspect a few research subjects to have made it sound as though they were employed on a regular basis whereas they were, in reality, more likely to be doing all sorts of irregular daily jobs whenever they could to make some money, taking on temporary projects that came up in the informal economy.

"... In the mornings I go there to the square near Dyonisios Church, you know where I am saying right? ...Eh, and I wait for somebody to come and get me for some job here or there... That's what we all do... We are a lot of us there... Locals know that if they need to find extra workforces for a day or so that they can find people there...but they don't always pick you... sometimes they only take 1, sometimes 5, it depends, you never know... since I am young I usually get picked, but there are days that they take other people and I don't get any work..."

(Interviewee nr. 14)

"... I only have an official contract for 20 hours a week at the restaurant. They did not want to give me a full-time contract... So I work in another bar too sometimes, when they need extra staff they call me to come work...and they pay me by day, cash..."

(Interviewee nr. 36)

Self-employment amongst the Albanian interviewees was rare and limited to 2 cases: one person was running their own small construction contracting company, and another man was running his own restaurant (which he – fittingly – chose to call 'Emigranti'). Both of these interviewees however also happened to have been on Zakynthos since the 90s, were married, and had settled on the island with their families. The rest of the research subjects – regardless of the length of their stay on Zakynthos – were all employed in businesses ran by locals.

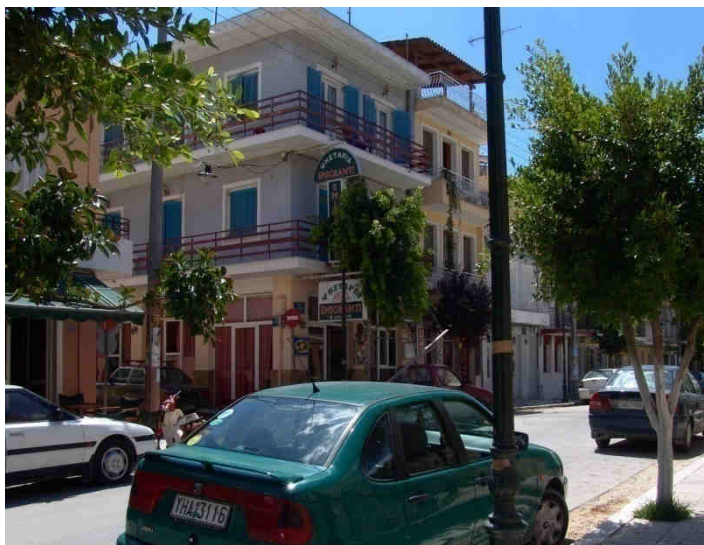


Fig. 7 – Psistaria 'Emigranti'

WORKING CONDITIONS

Whereas most Albanian interviewees seemed to suggest that they did not strongly resent their actual position in the local labor market, a considerable number amongst them did indeed express dissatisfaction with their specific working environment. In fact, given that most Albanians were working for somebody else, in many cases also without a contract giving them certain rights and guarantees, they generally had no option but to accept the rules set by their employer. Yet, according to the accounts of the research subjects, these regulations commonly tended to favor local employees.

“If I come only 10 minutes late, my boss keeps an hour of my pay... But if this Greek guy shows up 2 hours late, no problem! And they might even just go and sit down for a coffee, xalara...!”

(Interviewee nr. 31)

Albanian interviewees also repeatedly stressed how they frequently had to work long and exhausting hours – without getting any compensation for extra hours of work.

“I do not have a contract that says the number of hours that I have to work per week... sometimes I’m lucky and I only work 8 hours a day, and other times it’s 16! But whether I work 2 hours or 20, I’ll always get paid the same amount...it’s a standard daily pay...”

(Interviewee nr. 28)

Still, the actual rate of pay of Albanian immigrants working on Zakynthos is probably the most concerning aspect of their employment on the island, especially with an eye on their bargaining power on the housing market. Their incomes in fact, in multiple cases, went as low as 40-50% of the average income made by the Greek people on the island for the same job. This was especially the case amongst the women – perhaps because many of them were employed in the service sector in positions that locals as well are still willing to fulfill, more so than in agriculture and construction at least.

“at the kafeneio they give me 2,50 Euros an hour... that was the typical rate, that’s what they told me... there’s more Albanian girls working there, but there are also a few Greek girls, from here... one day I overheard them talking... that’s how I found out that they get twice as much as us! And we cannot even keep our tips; we have to share them with these girls that already make more than us...!”

(Interviewee nr. 19)

Another woman felt she had been misled by her employer with false premises and was now forced to ‘renting’ a room (though rent was deducted from her salary straight away) in the house of the sister of a disabled person that she was taking care of.

“I expected room and board to be included in the salary you know...usually they tell you ok we are going to pay you this much, and that then includes a place to stay and food. That’s how it was for me in Athens at least...But now in this case it wasn’t like that... I was told I was going to be paid a certain amount, and then when I arrived here it turned out that I would not be offered a room with that... I mean, when you are going to take care of a disabled person you expect to be placed in the same house as them yes? so you are there when they need you also... But no, I cannot stay in his [the disabled person’s] house because his elderly mother is still living there too and although she is not able to take care of him properly, she does not want anybody else to live with them either... So I go in every morning very early, and leave late at night...At least his sister lives right next door, I do not have to go far... but still, now I work during the day for one part of the family for me to go home for a few hours at night and give the money I earned back to another part of the same family...”

(Interviewee nr. 39)

Overall, men had higher incomes than women. However, they also tended to work longer hours/weeks. Additionally, there was a certain level of variation between various sectors of the economy: the males that were employed in construction generally earned slightly more than those in agriculture or even those in services. Still, it is hard to give any definite numbers on the average incomes of the Albanian interviewees because: 1) not everybody wanted to say how much they earned; and 2) some people gave me their average hourly rate, without any clear indication of the actual daily/ weekly hours they would work. Hence, Table 6 below shows the range of the incomes:

Table 6 – Range of Incomes of Albanian Workforce: Male vs. Female

	MALE Albanians	FEMALE Albanians	National Greek Minimum Wage (*)
Daily Income	15-40	10-25	25,01 Euro
Monthly Income	450-1000	200-400	559,98 Euro (**)

(*) These are the figures of 2005, corresponding to the time that this research was conducted. Relative figures may have been modified since then.
 (**) this is the absolute minimum, excluding any consideration for degrees, specializations, working experience, age, or marital status. In reality, there is almost nobody in Greece that receives this basic minimum wage; according to various criteria the effective minimum wage is normally higher!

This is not to say however, that all research subjects felt they were mistreated in their working environment! Nor does it imply that the entire sample was discontent with their working conditions. Despite tough schedules and lower average incomes compared to locals, several of the interviewees did suggest it was actually possible for them to earn a relatively decent income on Zakynthos. In fact, there was also a (smaller yet) considerable number of Albanian interviewees that explicitly claimed to be fairly treated by their employers (14 cases in total: 11 men and 3 women).

"...yes we work hard, all day, rain, heat, doesn't matter, we're always out there...but he [the employer] gives us our days off too... and he always makes sure we all get a break during the day... that we can sit a bit, eat something... sometimes he even treats us a drink at the end of the day..."

(Interviewee nr. 57)

"I do not earn that much, but at least I always get paid! I've heard stories where they do not even pay you... you work you work and you don't get anything! I have never had that... I get paid regularly thank god...and actually, last year, I even got a small raise...!"

(Interviewee nr. 59)

SPENDING PATTERNS

The rental prices paid by the Albanian interviewees may look fairly cheap to some. Still, considering their commonly low incomes, the proportion of their earnings spent on rent for usually mediocre accommodations is, overall, already quite significant. Indeed, not many interviewees showed to be willing to pay even higher amounts of rent just so they would have a nicer place to stay – they would generally opt to compromise.

"...I guess we could be living in a larger house, but that would mean we'd probably have to pay even more rent... there would be very little money left for other things then... eh, so we settled with this, ti na kanoume...for now..."

(Interviewee nr. 49)

The amount of dedication that an Albanian migrant will put into their residential dwelling in Zakynthos Town obviously also depends on his/her future prospects in life: whether they intend to permanently settle on Zakynthos and truly set up their lives here, or whether they plan to return to Albania and continue their lives there after a certain period abroad.

In this respect, more than half the research subjects, male and female, stated they were already reunited with their families or relatives on the island of Zakynthos. Additionally, a significant number of males stated their intention to bring their spouses or relatives over in the near future. As a matter of fact, on the whole, the vast majority of the interviewees – married or not – showed a lasting intention to remain on the island, at least until the time came for them to retire.

Yet, at present, the interviewees seemed to be especially cautious to invest more than a certain amount into their housing situation, especially because they still prioritized other expenses, such as sending remittances back home and/or building up future savings. In fact, the overwhelming majority of all the interviewees (46 cases) also suggested that whenever they could they would send part of their income as remittances to their families in Albania. Hence, by setting aside a proportion of their income for this purpose, many Albanian interviewees were, to a certain extent, consciously choosing to limit their purchasing powers on the housing market in Zakynthos Town.

Amongst the single men, especially the younger ones, a considerable number (18 cases in total) actually claimed they sent most of their incomes back to Albania to support their families back home. For these interviewees, a decent state of housing also generally seemed to be a secondary issue, and the amount of money from their earnings that was set aside for this purpose was restricted to the minimum possible.

“Unfortunately every month I have to give a big part of my salary just so that I have a roof and a bed. I would prefer to spend that money on other things... but what can I do?! I’m going to have to sleep somewhere... otherwise how am I going manage to go to work and make any money??”

(Interviewee nr. 9)

Instead, those interviewees that were staying with their relatives in Zakynthos Town appeared to send fewer remittances back home and be willing to dedicate more of their earnings to an amelioration of their own standards of living on the island.

“If I could I would send more... but it’s expensive to live here... first we have to pay the bills... there’s rent, we have to buy food, and for the car also! and my children are growing up...maybe they will want to go to college... all of this costs a lot of money... I cannot send a lot back to Albania; we would not be able to survive here...”

(Interviewee nr. 52)

– POLITICAL ASPECTS –

Several questions were formulated to try and get an idea of the legal grounds Albanian immigrants on Zakynthos commonly stand on, so as to see how this affects their housing situation. Discussing the political aspects of integration with Albanian immigrants on the island was probably the hardest part of the entire interview. Perhaps due to their constant fear of deportation, yet for some reason many Albanians tended to become particularly nervous around this specific topic and tried to keep their answers as short as possible, avoiding to get into too much detail. Despite a generic reluctance on behalf of several research subjects to dig into these aspects, a large part of the research subjects mentioned interesting points about the extent of their political integration that could have (in)direct consequences for their housing situation. This chapter shall therefore present the answers given by the interviewees to the following set of questions:

- Was it difficult for you to obtain residence / working permits? How long did it take? Do you believe you were discriminated at any point during application procedures?
- Do you receive social assistance / housing benefits / health insurance?
- Are you a member of any local Albanian association? Do they provide any support?

OBTAINMENT PERMITS

Of the 63 interviewees, merely 5 men and 3 women stated they were not in possession of a valid working permit at the time of the interview. However, the women were unemployed and the men all claimed they were in the process of either obtaining or renewing it, and suggested that it was only a question of local authorities actually handing them the paper rather than them not qualifying for it. Similarly, 1 man and 1 woman mentioned they did not have a valid residence permit at the time, but were supposedly 'awaiting' for the authorities to renew their residence permits and give it to them. All the others claimed they were legally registered on the island. In other words, there were allegedly no undocumented migrants amidst the interviewees of the sample.

Inopportunately, there is great reason to doubt the veracity of the answers provided by the interviewees to the questions that related to their legal status. In fact, considering the wary and suspicious way in which many of the research subjects responded to this specific part of the conversation, I suspect several interviewees to perhaps have 'embellished' the actual state of affairs regarding their legal status a bit, purely out of frightened precaution. To what extent this really happened I cannot tell with certainty, but in any case, I am aware of the fact that an entirely 'legal' sample is definitely not a realistic representation of the Albanian population on Zakynthos.

Most interviewees (38 cases) in fact did suggest that obtaining regular working permits and residence permits was generally not an easy mission for Albanians to achieve on the island of Zakynthos. Various obstacles hampering a smooth course of application procedures came forward during the conversations with the research subjects, including language and communication difficulties, excessive bureaucratic complications, abnormally long waiting periods, a lack of (international) institutional collaboration, and preferential treatments by local public officers.

“When I got here I did not know how things worked, hell I barely spoke any Greek! And then they ask me to fill in all these forms, in Greek!? I would never have managed if it wasn’t for my brother who could help me translate...”

(Interviewee nr. 10)

“...I had to go back to the municipality so many times... first they wanted me to give this, then that, then something else...They kept telling me different things every time I went there.. I think all together it took me something like 9 months, almost a year!!, for them to give me a working permit – just a little piece of paper!!”

(Interviewee nr. 45)

“...I got my residence permit quite fast actually... I came here to work, I had a contract and everything, so in the end they gave it me without too many problems... but to get one for my wife...now that was another story! I had to come up with so many papers, unbelievable...! ...I had to have a copy of our marriage certificate and of our birth certificates, which I did not have here with me... I asked them: ‘can’t you get them from Albania?’, but they said:’ no you must contact them and have them send it to us’...”

(Interviewee nr. 23)

“Last time I had to renew my residence permit I took a day off from work to go and sort things out, I knew there were going to be long waiting lines, it’s always like that... so I was sitting there, together with a lot of other people, there were a lot of Albanians but also people from other countries, and we were all waiting for somebody to call our turn... but then an English person comes in... And while some of us had been waiting there for much longer than him, the English guy was helped immediately... he arrived, he went in, and he was out within 30min...Instead, in the end, I had to go back the next day and waste another day in that office again!!”

(Interviewee nr. 62)

In reality, not many Albanians stressed incidences of overt discrimination against them by public officials. In general, dealing with local welfare employees was perhaps not always a particularly pleasant experience, but few interviewees emphasized a truly denigrating attitude. Nonetheless, an especially worrisome matter that came up during

several interviews was the fact that when Albanian immigrants wanted to regularize their presence on the island, they needed to pay fairly large amounts (=bribes!!), even to office clerks or higher ranked officials. It is perhaps a limited number, yet, in my eyes, in all too many cases (8!!) did the interviewees suggest that to get anything done, they had no other choice but to pay whoever was dealing with their case a little extra as a sign of so-called 'cooperation' and 'appreciation'.

"For an Albanian to get anything done here, he always has to have money in his pockets...I paid 500 euro!! just to get my boss to give me an official contract so I could stay...he would not give it to me otherwise, and I had no other choice, if I wanted to be able to renew my residence permit, I needed a contract... I didn't know anyone else that could give me one, so, I paid...bam, cash...what can we do?! It's like that..."

(Interviewee nr. 37)

"... for the residence permit, they send you a letter at home when you can go and pick it up, normally you get it after a month or so at the most. So when I still did not hear from them after some time, I went there, and the man at the desk told me the letter was sent already, and that if I wanted to have it sent again, I had to pay...I said 'pay for what??' and he said 'pay for the extra service!' so I did, I gave him some money... even though they probably never sent that first letter!"

(Interviewee nr. 4)

WELFARE BENEFITS

In Greece, it is possible for people to be covered by health insurance through their employment, but it requires both the employer and the employee to pay a set of contributions, of which the precise amount depends on the sector in which they are working. However, these contributions – also called social stamps – are not automatically deducted from an employee's salary. Instead, it is up to the employees themselves to go and pay for them at the IKA, who then literally places a 'stamp' in a little insurance booklet that every adult in Greece possesses and needs to take with him when he/she goes for medical visits as proof for coverage.

Of the 63 interviewees, the majority (35 cases) claimed they were up to date with their payments of these so-called stamps, thereby being insured. However, a considerable number of the interviewees (11 cases) also suggested that this form of social security was not all that important to them, and was merely a formality they had to abide by to be able to meet the criteria for residency.

“In the beginning I was paying for these stamps all the time... I was new here, I didn’t know how things worked, and to apply for a residence permit they told me I had to have these stamps, some kind of medical insurance or something... in all these years though I have never been to see a doctor here... only once I cut myself badly... but they took me to the emergencies at the hospital and there they just stitched me up without me having to pay anything...from that moment I stopped buying any more of these stamps...since there is no need for it!”

(Interviewee nr. 3)

Curiously enough, from the interviews it also appeared as though the Albanian migrants on Zakynthos generally preferred not to make any additional demands from the Greek government. Even if they were legally registered, and could possibly qualify for social assistance schemes, they did not show to be keen to rely on governmental aid. Perhaps due to their own historical past in Albania, or because of any negative experiences they may have been through upon their arrival in Greece, yet for some reason Albanian migrants overall seemed to be particularly reluctant to believe the government could and/or would actually help them with anything.

“What help from the government?? I’ll be lucky enough if they give me a permit, and even for that, it’s me who has to pay them! I don’t get anything from the state...you have to take care of your own things here if you want to do something, you cannot rely on the government to help you organize your life...”

(Interviewee nr. 53)

Accordingly, with the exception of occasional medical reimbursements, there were indeed no Albanian interviewees that stated they received any financial aid from the state. Whether they were living with an income above or below the national minimum, none of them applied for any social security schemes that could perhaps have offered them some form of economic relief.

Moreover, while discussing the extent of welfare benefits that interviewees received on Zakynthos, a striking element that came up is the fact that many Albanian immigrants of the sample were not even aware of the fact that such a thing as ‘housing schemes/benefits’ actually existed!

“...if I get any help from the state for the house?! You really think they are going to give me money to pay my rent now...?! (siga mi mou dosoune kai lefta gia to niki tora!)”

(Interviewee nr. 43)

In fact, overall, the Albanian interviewees showed an apparent lack of education about existing structures of social assistance, not just about the ones that apply to Greece, but in general! Many of them actually turned out to be oblivious to the entire idea. Not surprisingly, with this deficiency of knowledge also came a general disbelief in the ability of the central state or local governments to possibly do anything that would benefit their existence on Zakynthos.

ALBANIAN ACTIVISM

What seemed to be a particularly interesting development of the Albanian community on Zakynthos is the fact that an increasing number of Albanian migrants is starting to show a consistent level of political participation and activism. As a matter of fact, there is a fairly large Albanian association that, according to its members, unites close to a 1000 Albanian migrants in a quest to speak up and defend the rights of the Albanian population on the island.

“If we want to change things, improve them, we have to stand together... I think those of us who join the association do so because they believe that united we’re stronger than alone! We’ll be able to have more impact on the people here if we speak as one, you know... Now, politicians do not listen to us because we do not have any representatives of our community to go and say what the Albanian people think... this association is going to bring change in that, you’ll see!”

(Interviewee nr. 12)

However, opinions regarding the actual function and efficiency of this ‘political’ Albanian association were mixed amongst the research subjects of the sample. On the one hand, some Albanian interviewees spoke very highly of it; on the other hand, others seemed not to trust the organization or its members for one bit!

“We are here to help other Albanians with whatever problems they may have here on Zakynthos...to give you an example, a while ago I went to the municipality with somebody who had been denied a residence permit. He did not speak Greek very well... I do, and I have been here for many years now... so he came to me to help him understand what the problem was with his application. Then when I accompanied him to the municipality, we managed to get his paperwork sorted out. He should be getting his permit any day now!”

(Interviewee nr. 11)

“...there’s more and more people sto syllogo....this association is a way to get to know each other, to exchange news and stuff, about here but also about things that happen back in Albania... and we have a laugh...! We sit here [in a specific tavern that has come to represent the base-camp of the main Albanian association] and talk, you know...”

(Interviewee nr. 27)

“I used to hang out with these other guys from my work before, they were all part of this association... eh so they tried to get me into it too... at first I thought why not, I did not even know what this organization was all about anyway you know?! But then I heard I had to pay to become a member, so I thought what’s this?! They said it was just a small fee to support the costs of the organization.... but I mean, what costs?! What are they doing for me that I would pay?? I still don’t really know what it is this association does exactly...except for them having coffee together...to go pay for that, bah...!”

(Interviewee nr. 22)

– SOCIAL ASPECTS –

In order to try and get an idea of the social capital/connections that Albanians are able to rely on during their search for housing on Zakynthos, several questions were also geared at understanding what kind of social networks Albanians partake to on the island. Consequently, we shall here discuss the answers to the following questions:

- What do you like doing in your free time? Do you go out? If so, where? Do you mostly hang out with other Albanians or with Greeks?
- Do you ever feel unwanted in particular places in Town? Do you feel that Greeks and Albanians are living (spatially) separated lives on Zakynthos? (i.e. separate use of social / public spaces)
- Do you think it is easier for Albanian immigrants to integrate on an island such as Zakynthos than it would be in major cities like say Athens or Thessalonica?

LEISURE ACTIVITIES

The answers given by the research subjects to the question concerning their actual leisure activities obviously varied. Nevertheless, with regard hereto, it seems as though Albanian immigrants have truly embraced the Greek mode of life as the most common answer to this question was by far ‘going for a coffee’.

Fig. 8 – St. Dionysios Sq.

“What I do in my free time?? Eh, not much really... usually I go for a coffee or something, a drink, with some other people, there on the square close to the church [i.e. Agios Dyonisios Church]... There’s not much else to do here anyway...”

(Interviewee nr. 34)



Remarkably, no interviewee engaged into any sports during their free time! Suggesting to an interviewee they were perhaps doing some exercise during their free time triggered an outburst of ironic laughter on more than one occasion, indicating they worked hard jobs that demanded plenty of physicality already.

“What sports re?? You think when I come home from a long day at work I still have the force to go and work out at the gym or something?! What are you saying girl...!?!”

(Interviewee nr. 25)

58 interviewees answered they generally spent their free time with other Albanians, while 3 interviewees (all 3 of them men) claimed they spent an equal amount of leisure time with Albanians as they did with Greeks. Instead, there was no interviewee that stated it spent more time with Greeks than it did with Albanians!

Most Albanians – regardless of the length of their stay on the island – mentioned how they spend most time with other Albanians simply because they did not have any Greek friends to hang out with. They perhaps knew local people from the island but these people were generally considered to be acquaintances rather than close friendships.

“It’s been 7 years now that I am here now and still I cannot say that I made any Greek friends really... I don’t know why... it’s not that I dislike the Greeks... but since there are so many other Albanians around here it is just easier for me to start talking to them, it is less of an effort I guess...”

(Interviewee nr. 12)

“No I don’t spend my free time with Greeks...! Why would I? We cannot communicate anyway... I have to work with them all day already; I am not going to spend that little free time that I have with people that I do not understand...!”

(Interviewee nr. 18)

As far as leisure activities, Albanian women seemed to live much more reserved lives than the men. Rather than meeting up with friends/relatives outside, they seemed to prefer to visit each other at their own houses: to exchange news, gossip, and help each other with various chores. Only on rare occasions did they really ‘go out’ for a drink, and that would usually occur in the company of their husbands.

“I do not really go out a lot... only if my husband takes me somewhere... maybe we go for a drink or for a dinner or something...but otherwise I usually just go and hang out with some friend at their place...”

(Interviewee nr. 38)

There was, however, a noticeable difference between the level of activity of young Albanian men in their twenties and the older Albanian men, with the former being much more outgoing than the latter. Whereas the ‘older’ generation of Albanians meets up in their own familiar coffee shops and restaurants for a chat, the younger generation seems to adventure itself more and more into alternative forms of entertainment. In fact, the younger Albanian interviewees also mentioned they enjoyed spending free time in internet cafés, on bowling alleys, at pool bars, and in specific disco-bars.

Still, all in all, the Albanian interviewees generally maintained they did not have a lot of ‘free time’ anyway: *“I am here to work, not to have a party...! Any time I get off I try to sleep and get back in shape for the next day...!”*

(Interviewee nr. 4)

USE OF PUBLIC SPACE: MIGRANTS VS LOCALS

Albanians have, to a certain extent, managed to ‘appropriate’ themselves of their own hang-out spots: the coffee shops on the square near St. Dyonisios church as well as multiple bars and psistaries on Agios Lazarou Street are generally dominated by an overwhelming Albanian presence. Only rarely do you find a Greek person there, and if so, they are most likely to have some sort of business to be discussed with the Albanians rather than pleasure. Funnily enough, I myself was even called out on this matter! 😊



Fig. 8 – ‘Albanian’ Coffeeshop

“...if they [locals] come here it’s because they want to ask us something...sti teliki, you too! Why you think you’re sitting here? I have never seen you here before...! Etsi den einai?! ...but you were looking for Albanians...eh, here we are!”

(Interviewee nr. 58)

When explicitly asked if they were ever being 'kept out' of certain parts of town by local Zakynthians who openly disliked their presence and would make them feel ill at ease, a significant number of interviewees suggested there were specific places where Albanians were allegedly 'allowed' to hang out, and others that were pretty much off limit, *"unless you want to sit there and hear their stupid jokes about Albanians..."*

(Interviewee nr. 14)

In fact, it is rather unlikely to see an Albanian in what are deemed to be the more 'trendy' bars and clubs of the island, or out in one of its most notorious restaurants. Several interviewees mentioned how certain places/bars that were popular amongst the locals did not give them proper service.

"if I go and sit at Base on the main square they all stare at me like I am from the moon or something... and it takes me an hour to get the waiter to bring me a drink... whereas in the bar right next to it einai mia xara...there's less people there also generally..."

(Interviewee nr. 29)

Although perhaps not always very successful, Albanian men at least still occasionally tried to break out this so-called division of territories, attempting little escapades into the public spaces 'presided' by locals.

"There are lots of bars and clubs and all that here, out of the Hora also... Sometimes we go but once they charged me double entrance, at Barrage, u know it? Just because they saw I was Albanian... and other times they would not even let me in, when I was with one or more friends...les kai tha tous xalasoume to meros..."

(Interviewee nr. 45)

Instead, Albanian women in particular seemed to try harder to stay out of the way in places that were overwhelmed by locals. For instance, once, during an incident that was witnessed at a hairdresser's, there were more women waiting for their hair to be done. At some point, the hairdressers called the next person to come for their cut. This stirred some commotion in the salon, with everybody claiming to be the next in line. The only person that didn't say anything was an Albanian woman that was sitting there... it was only when the hairdresser showed up that it became evident that she was actually the next in line, yet she had not mentioned anything earlier. It was the hairdresser herself that walked up to her and said: 'Weren't you here first? ...what, you're a paying customer like anybody else aren't you?! Eh, common then!' The Albanian woman then, very hesitantly, followed the hairdresser, keeping her eyes low, in what was probably an attempt to avoid any confrontational looks by any of the other women...

The most tangible clashes on this front, however, seemed to occur between the younger generations of both Albanians and locals. On the one side, the younger Albanians are increasingly attracted to the local ways of entertainment, thereby extending their exploration of Town into new areas. On the other side, it looks as though local youngsters are increasingly inclined to resent the 'invasion' of Albanians of 'their' island. In fact, I had the opportunity to witness several celebrations of traditional holidays in Zakynthos Town, and in those particular occasions the tension visibly mounted between the 2 communities as the dispute over 'spaces' was (in the eyes of the locals at least!) turned into one between 'traditions'.



“Look around you, there’s so many Albanians here...! gamiseta, they don’t even let us celebrate our carnival anymore!”

(24-year old Zakynthian male)

On the one hand, Albanians showed willingness to change and learn; they appeared to be eager to live and find out about those social experiences they missed out on back in Albania – they came to experience something different! Albanian migrants in Zakynthos in fact generally came with a modest attitude, without any pretenses, open and actually curious to find out about new ways of life.

“I’ve never seen such celebrations as here for the Saint [Dyonisios, the protector of the island that is celebrated at the end of August]... with the procession and the carrying of the body around town...it’s quite amazing! Sometimes I wish my family were here for them to see these things too!”

(Interviewee nr. 19)

On the other hand, Zakynthians generally came across as being more reluctant to change; they often appeared to be diffident to adapt to the migrants bringing in new ways of life/perspectives. In reality, they seem to resent the fact that they have lost certain spaces to the foreigners (to a certain extent of course and on different levels with different people), and then especially to the Albanians, because they still perceive Zakynthos to be 'their' island, which the foreigners have, in a way, 'stolen' from them, depriving them of something over which they feel they have a certain 'right'. In this respect, it is a shame that locals seem to perceive the arrival of (Albanian) immigrants on the whole as a threat that might lead to social 'backwardness', instead of seeing it an opportunity to grow and develop as a multicultural society/country.

ISLAND VS. CITY

Social interaction between Albanians and locals as far as leisure activities thus appeared to be quite limited in Zakynthos Town. Indeed, in their spare time, both sides generally tried to stick to their own 'territories' entertaining themselves with other people from the same ethnicity. Still, this does not imply there is no contact whatsoever between the Albanian migrants and Zakynthians outside of the working environment. In fact, the benefit (which could also be considered a disadvantage in certain cases) that comes from living in a smaller location is that there seems to be a certain kind of familiarity between individual people that is commonly scarce in large, extended, crowded and thereby 'anonymous' urban settings – living within restricted boundaries appeared to lead to unavoidable confrontations and at least some form of recognition of the 'Other':

"...it's a small Town you know, you always go to the same places and you see the same faces a lot...so people recognize you after some time... they might not say hello to you but they know who you are, what you are up to sort of... I always go to the periptero near my house to get cigarettes... in the beginning the guy would never say anything to me: I went, I said what I wanted, I gave him the money, and I left... now though, sometimes we exchange a few words...we don't tell each other about all our lives or something but he may ask me 'so how is it today?' or 'tough day at work ey?'..."

(Interviewee nr. 28)

"It took my neighbors 3 years to start saying hello to me... but now, every time they see me, they wave at me or they give me a little nod... they know me by now... they know we're not there to cause any trouble..."

(Interviewee nr. 49)

As a result, due to the specific context it looked as though there were actually several opportunities for Albanians and locals to exchange (superficial) thoughts and converse, eventually getting acquainted with each other to a certain extent. Still, whereas there was perhaps 'forced' interaction in the public sphere between migrants and locals fairly frequently out of sheer necessity, this did not automatically imply there would be greater affinity in the private spheres between locals and Albanians on Zakynthos as well.

"I came from Athens actually! Hoping it would be better here... fewer crowds, less hustle and bustle... in the end though, I feel people here can be even meaner... everybody knows each other, and you know, people talk...! I never told any people here basically, but they all know everything about me, personal details and everything... eh afou they're always together, I think my boss [/landlady] is talking behind my back all the time!"

(Interviewee nr. 39)

**PART VI:
CONCLUSION**

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In order to answer the main research question, first we need to determine, on the basis of the available data, whether or not the spatial distribution of Albanian housing in Zakynthos Town makes up for a pattern of spatial integration or one of segregation. It is not to say that this research has managed to obtain all the necessary data to say with certainty that one is in truth over the other. Of course the criteria to assess this with accuracy are normally very detailed and require extensive research. Nonetheless, awareness of the fact that generalizations are not necessarily an undisputable rule, and vigilance over any possible outliers and their effect on the general rule, allow for certain generic statements to be made all the same in answer to the following questions:

- ✓ *What is the spatial distribution of Albanian immigrants' housing in Zakynthos Town?*
i.e. Where do they live?
- ✓ *What are the housing conditions of Albanian immigrants in Zakynthos Town compared to the average local standards?*
i.e. How do they live?

Granted, in view of the limited findings obtained and discussed during this research, it would be too bold to apply the term segregation to describe the spatial distribution of Albanian immigrants in Zakynthos Town. Yes, the housings of Albanian immigrants are not solely contained within one or two specific neighborhoods, nor are there any neighborhoods that are entirely shunned by local Zakynthians – Albanians can still be found residing in different locations all over Town, this much is true. Hence, to talk about 'segregation' is perhaps indeed too harsh of a statement in this case. Nevertheless, this is not to say that what we are witnessing in Zakynthos Town qualifies for a positive trend of spatial integration either! Instead, in view of the rapidly rising aggregation of Albanian immigrants in the least desirable neighborhoods and dwellings of Zakynthos Town, it would not be all too farfetched to proclaim that their pattern of spatial integration is slowly but surely decomposing.

Some could argue that this research does not emphasize the extent to which migrants 'voluntarily chose' to settle in certain areas of Town. Indeed, one should maybe not be talking about 'segregation' as such so long as it is not determined whether this is a self-induced phenomenon resulting from individual choices for a specific 'way of life', or if it is the outcome of external institutional constraints. Still, regardless, it is hard to deny that there is a significant congregation of Albanian immigrants in specific areas of Town that are generally not considered to be the most popular neighborhoods in Town. Moreover, these Albanian immigrants were generally living in houses that were in worse conditions than the average dwelling in Zakynthos Town. Hence, if the housing pattern of Albanian migrants in Zakynthos Town it is not yet one of ruthless segregation, it is not one of positive integration either. Rather, I would say it is in the midst of a discomfoting phase of disintegration.

✓ *How does the position of Albanian immigrants in the Zakynthian economy affect their level of spatial disintegration?*

i.e. What is Albanians' financial bargaining power on the housing market?

Greece is a member of the European Union and part of the so-called 'developed world', as a result of which its economy is simply too involved and intertwined to be able to resist the capitalistic values that are gradually being imposed around the world by the globalised and 'liberalized' economy. Hence, a critical factor influencing the living conditions of a person within such a society is – to put it bluntly – money. Especially in Greece, where the housing market is basically entirely in the hands of private players, the amount of financial means a person disposes of will inevitably affect their bargaining position, either creating or cutting options for themselves.

The economic dimension of the conceptual model that supports this research stipulated there are specific forces in this modern, globalised world that are affecting the course of economic integration of migrants in developed countries, and thereby, of their spatial integration as well. At this point, the question is: which of these apply to the Albanian immigrants who decide to move to Greece and settle down in Zakynthos Town? And more importantly, how do these dynamics influence their bargaining position in the local housing market?

The economic 'market exchange' approach stressed the fact that the present world is characterized by an intense process of tertiarization of its economy – one that encourages the primary and the secondary sectors of the economies around the world to become less and less prestigious, while creating a growing discrepancy between skilled and unskilled forms of employment at the same time. Consequently, these developments have come to generate an occupational segmentation of the workforce. This, in turn, has intensified social labeling and stigmatization of certain kinds of jobs, where increasingly educated native inhabitants refuse to take on specific forms of employment. Thus, theory suggested that chances were high these days that incoming migrant labor forces end up filling the least prestigious vacancies that are shunned by native labor forces.

What became apparent throughout this case-study was that, to one extent or the other, all of these developments are also visible on the island of Zakynthos. In fact, today, tourism is the main source of income of the island of Zakynthos. There is therefore a new variety of functions opening up in the local labor market, drawing more and more workers into the tertiary service industry, at the expense of the traditionally established agricultural sector. These kinds of diversifications however, also seem to be going hand in hand with an intensification of the differentiation of the workforce on Zakynthos between those calling the technical shots (locals) and those doing the menial work (foreigners). Hence, a related corollary of a generically marginal economic integration of Albanian immigrants for their bargaining position on the private housing market in Zakynthos Town is a commonly inhibited economic strength, or should we say weakness rather.

In reality, the subjects from the research sample turned out to be mainly employed in particular branches of the local economy, namely in agriculture, construction, and in the service industry. Within these fields, it also appeared that overall the interviewees were employed in positions for 'unskilled' labor forces - in other words, they were generally fulfilling the hardest, most physical, and least wanted vacancies on the job market. Still, interviewees did not seem to complain so much about these forms of occupational differentiation. Instead, it looked like they had more or less surrendered themselves to the idea that they tended to be constrained to specific positions in the labor market, especially because what seemed to matter most was that at least they had an opportunity to work. It was perhaps not always permanent or stable forms of employment, nor did their jobs necessarily match their qualifications, but on the whole the research subjects appeared to be more content with the fact that they could have work if they wanted than they were frustrated over their actual position in the labor market.

However, more significant with regard to their bargaining power, a large number of Albanian migrants that were interviewed claimed to earn less than the average Greek worker would make per hour. Indeed, on top of the fact that Albanian immigrants tend to be placed in specific niches of the labor market, the local Zakynthian economy is also predominantly composed of small, family-based businesses, which – in a deficient institutional framework as that of Greece – can easily evade governmental regulations and checks. An accurate examination of the extent of the informal economy of Zakynthos is still lacking for that was not the aim of this research. Still, the general opinion of the island's inhabitants did suggest that the size of the informal economy on Zakynthos is at least as big as the national average, if not larger! That the informal economy indeed provides ample employment opportunities on Zakynthos was also confirmed by the fact that, even though all research subjects claimed to be in possession of (or waiting for) a working permit (which may or may not be true), a large number amongst them admitted they were actually making their income through a series of undeclared jobs in the informal economy. Not surprisingly, according to the stories told by the Albanian interviewees, 'exploitation' of the immigrant workforce is not an uncommon occurrence on Zakynthos either. In fact, several interviews showed how sometimes Albanian migrants find themselves in a situation where they work extremely long hours and do not even receive the national minimum salary.

Still, we cannot neglect the fact that individual spending patterns – also with regard to housing – are a matter of subjective priorities. Considering the precarious living conditions and the generally unstable environment in which they find themselves in Greece, rather than choosing to spend their earnings on an improvement of their housing, Albanian migrants on Zakynthos at this point still seem to prioritize their savings, either to send remittances back to Albania, or to build up a solid financial foundation for future investments in Greece. In the assessment of their level of spatial integration it is therefore also important to bear consideration for how much of their budget Albanian migrants on Zakynthos are really willing to give up to ameliorate their housing situation.

✓ Which political instruments support the process of spatial disintegration of Albanian immigrants on Zakynthos?

i.e. Are Albanians getting help from the (local) government to settle down?

The second dimension of the theoretical framework focused on a set of political aspects that affects the housing pattern of Albanian immigrants on Zakynthos. Concerning the issue of citizenship, Greek legislation is one that prioritizes the principle of *ius sanguinis* – if one can prove to be of Greek descent, he/she will be granted the Greek nationality, automatically gaining the right to work and reside in the country. Instead, for Albanians who are not of Greek origins that come to Zakynthos as economic migrants, becoming a regularly registered citizen with all due rights and duties appeared to be quite an ordeal. To apply for a working permit they need to have a formal contract from their employer; to apply for a residence permit they must show they have a valid working permit; and to apply for Greek citizenship they must prove to have resided in Greece for at least 10 years. However, from what the interviewees told us, this particular sequel of certifications is not always easily or rapidly accomplished by Albanian immigrants.

In fact, decentralizing competences to lower tiers of government as far as the application and/or issuance of residence and working permits for immigrants is concerned sounds nice, if only such developments would have been accompanied by the necessary changes and adaptations in the organizational frameworks of local governments as well. Local municipalities/prefectures are indeed ‘closer’ to the immigrant in distance, but smaller municipalities/prefectures in rural/island regions also tend to have lesser staff and be less equipped than those in major urban centers! Yet, the proportion of Albanian immigrants on Zakynthos is exceptional! Hence, local Zakynthian institutions commonly struggle coping with the amount of work that is being dropped on them. The latest immigration law that attempted the decentralization of relevant competences has therefore perhaps shortened the physical distance between the political apparatus and the migrants, but in terms of delays and inaptitude, the gap risks to continue to increase.

Besides the trials and tribulations many Albanian interviewees had to go through to obtain their working/residence permits, something else that became immediately apparent concerning the political rights of Albanian immigrants with regard to their housing situation on Zakynthos is the fact that there is absolutely no apposite policy aimed at providing the migrants with any form of support in this field. Any kind of housing policy that may apply to Zakynthos is decided upon in Athens and is directly linked to a person’s employment record and past contributions, which does not specifically apply to newly entering migrants. Yet, Zakynthos is dealing with extremely large numbers of migrants coming in – all of which are going to have to be sheltered one way or another. Regrettably, the entire issue of the ‘spatial integration’ of Albanian immigrants – which is nonetheless a fundamental aspect of a successful immigration policy – seems to be something that the government is not interested to supervise or monitor in any way.

Also, considering the fact that the research subjects from the sample all claimed to be registered – meaning they allegedly had access to the (few) social assistance schemes that exist in Greece – a question that remains completely unanswered is the extent of the ‘illegality’ of Albanian migrants that settle down on the island of Zakynthos. Besides the ‘legal’ Albanian migrants who receive no assistance at all with regard to their housing, and very little (financial) aid in general from a notoriously weak Greek welfare state, there are an unknown (but likely to be a significant) number of Albanian migrants as well of which the (local) government is not even aware. However, these people are there, and they also seek housing! Consequently, the higher the demand on a limited private housing market, the higher the prices – hence, there is also this additional strain of competition on the housing market on Zakynthos that entirely escapes governmental management.

Of course, the island of Zakynthos, although a prefecture on its own, cannot escape the national policies that are dictated by the central government in Athens in the field of migration, or housing for that matter. Nevertheless, being part of a separate island region with a specific historical and cultural legacy of its own, one could wish for Zakynthos to be able to distinguish itself from the rest of Greece as far as the local organizational culture of welfare employees is concerned. Disappointingly, this did not really seem to be the case. This is not to say that all public officials on Zakynthos are necessarily prone to discriminate Albanian immigrants in particular. As a matter of fact, very few of the Albanian interviewees of the sample candidly complained about any incidences of discrimination. However, considering certain attitudes towards Albanian immigrants that were witnessed amidst local residents, and the occasional corruptive abuse of welfare employees, the general discourse does not exactly seem to favor their presence either. Therefore, I fear a prejudiced discourse is slowly but surely pervading the local institutions in Zakynthos (Town), creating serious reason for concern in the future!

In view of all of the above, we could almost say that, as far as political instruments actually ‘supporting’ a positive process of spatial integration of migrants, there are, essentially, none on Zakynthos. Institutional aid offered to immigrants is – to say the least – minimal, and there is no specific local organization offering any assistance or directive for the accommodation of incoming migrants on the island.

Interestingly enough, one aspect of the political integration of Albanian immigrants on Zakynthos that may lead to exciting developments in the (near) future is the fact they are beginning to get structurally and soundly organized amongst themselves. At present, the main local Albanian association is still far from having a strong and influential voice in any of the decision-making processes that take place on Zakynthos concerning the existence of the Albanian population on the island. Amongst local politicians, any Albanian activism is simply not taken serious enough – yet! Nevertheless, adherence to the Albanian association is steadily growing, providing grounds for fruitful cooperation. Indeed, Albanian migrants in Zakynthos Town hereby get the opportunity to become increasingly educated about the ‘democratic’ political system they are now part of in Greece: slowly but surely they are becoming more and more informed about their rights, and with that seems to come a gradually intensifying determination to pursue them. Hopefully this will lead them to demand respectable living conditions as well!

✓ *How do local networks of Albanian immigrants influence their degree of spatial disintegration in Zakynthos Town?*

i.e. Do Albanians possess the necessary contacts to be able to find a home?

Finally, the third pillar of the theoretical foundation behind this research centered around the social aspects of the integration of immigrants and their implications for the housing situation of Albanian migrants on the island of Zakynthos. Given the fact that the local housing market is entirely in control of private parties, these social dynamics are an unavoidable complication that has disparaging repercussions for any negotiations.

During the interviews with the Albanian immigrants, the attempt was made to have a deeper look at their social life on Zakynthos – to find out how they spend their free time, what activities they like to practice for leisure, and who they spend their time with. Further insights on the interactive relationships in which Albanian immigrants engage were necessary in order to get an idea of their so-called social capital – composed of the social networks that provide support and assistance, but also knowledge and information – which affects both their housing search as well as their entire process of integration.

Regarding solid and constructive interethnic networking between local Zakynthians and Albanian immigrants, there seemed to be quite little of it in Zakynthos Town. According to the interviewees, most forms of interaction between members of the two communities were generally limited to the working environment. Despite the fact that several interviewees had already spent a long period on Zakynthos, they claimed to have none or very basic reciprocal relationships with local Zakynthians. Accordingly, during their leisure time, both Albanians and Zakynthians apparently tried to stay out of each other ways as much as possible.

In reality, the use of specific public spaces in Zakynthos Town turned out to be fairly separated between Albanians and Greeks in general: Albanians ‘dominate’ certain hang-out spots, locals ‘possess’ others. Curiously enough though, it seems there is something like an unspoken understanding between the Greeks and the Albanians about this. Each has reserved their own well-defined places to hang out, and (basically) everybody seems to comply to this division of space as if it was totally normal – Greeks don’t intrude Albanian space, Albanians don’t intrude Greek space.

The slightly older generation of Albanians in particular, or immigrants that only recently arrived on the island – who also tend to be the cases that still maintain strong links to social networks back in Albania – respect this division even more; they really seem to want to keep a low profile, as if they do not want to cause any trouble by upsetting the locals, of whom they are very well aware of that they tend to be (occasionally) hostile towards them. Hence they prefer to stick to their own spots where they feel they are ‘safe’ and do not risk ‘disturbing’ or ‘aggravating’ the locals.

The younger generation of Albanians however – the one that is growing up on the island of Zakynthos, integrating and often excelling in Greek schools, and that no longer feels as strongly connected to their country of origin – is starting to adventure more and more into what are still considered to be ‘Greek spaces’ by the locals. These kinds of confrontations have proven to be especially tangible and tense in certain instances, most notably during big traditional celebrations (i.e. Panigiria, Carnival, etc.).

In fact, Zakynthos may be an island, but nowadays its society is no longer isolated from that of the mainland: multiple forms of media coverage make sure that all kinds of news and hypes from the mainland also instantly make their way to the more remote areas of the country. As a result, the people of Zakynthos – in spite of their fierce conviction that they would have a more tolerant vision of ‘the Other’ than people from other regions of Greece – do not seem to succeed to elope from that specifically Greek type of prejudice that goes by the term ‘Albanophobia’ either. In fact, locals commonly associate growing numbers of Albanians to rising crime rates on the island, while local media have also been known to distort the truth around burglaries or even murders that took place, incriminating innocent Albanian immigrants. On the whole, the general public on the island does not seem to have a very positive image of the Albanian immigrant.

Nevertheless, the fact that Zakynthos Town is part of an island community does mean that one’s existence there is less ‘anonymous’ so to say. It is a relatively small location where people are ‘forced’ to interact with each other to a certain extent, whether they want to or not, simply due to the fact that space is limited and there are only so many places one can go to. Also, because of the fact that Albanian immigrants are generally not independent entrepreneurs on Zakynthos, they do not own a lot of businesses like shops or restaurants. Hence, for daily purchases and necessities, Albanian migrants cannot resort to people from their own community, having no other option but to interact with the locals. Consequently, it is perhaps not necessarily always a friendly relation, yet it looks like at least there is greater awareness and familiarity between people in such a setting: individual faces and behavior do not pass unnoticed as much as they generally would in more crowded urban environments. There appear to be slightly more connecting points between the ‘us’ and the ‘other’, helping to make the ‘stranger within’ perhaps somewhat less estranged.

All together however, it does not appear to be easy or self-evident for Albanian immigrants to set up the necessary social contacts that would give them a hand in finding a suitable accommodation on a private housing market. On a more positive note, the particular context within which they are living does appear to create certain opportunities for people that are part of different social networks to establish some form of contact and mutual acquaintance. Unfortunately, it also seems that a prejudiced public discourse still places Albanian immigrants all too quickly in a category of ‘unreliable’ and ‘untrustworthy’ people – the kind of people that one would prefer not to rent their house to if they had the choice. At present, Albanians are not yet frequently denied a house in Zakynthos Town because of their nationality. It seems there are still more than enough houses available on the market for immigrants to find somebody that just urgently needs to rent their place out. However, the moment the local housing market becomes saturated, I would not be surprised to see an intensification of ethnically bound preferential treatments.

CENTRAL QUESTION:

- ✓ *What interplay of economic, political and social dynamics motivates the pattern of spatial disintegration of Albanian immigrants on Zakynthos?*

The starting point of this research was to examine the veracity of the next viewpoint:

The specific interplay of political, economic, and social dynamics on Zakynthos generally promotes a positive pattern of spatial integration^() of Albanians in Zakynthos Town.*

(*) = low levels of segregation and relatively good housing conditions

Yet, the investigations that were conducted during this research have proven the above standpoint to be false. At this point, all things considered, it should be reformulated to:

The specific interplay of economic, political and social dynamics on Zakynthos generally promotes a pattern of spatial disintegration^() of Albanians in Zakynthos Town.*

(*) = rising levels of segregation and relatively poor housing conditions

This research showed there to be a certain limit to the amount of financial commitment Albanian migrants were willing to make to their housing situation in Zakynthos Town: whether they were part of a larger household or not; intending to settle or leave, and regardless of their employment/income, they seemed to have set a threshold for themselves over which they generally did not feel comfortable crossing purely for the sake of their material comfort. As a matter of fact, the entire issue of their housing conditions was generally not at the top of the list of their concerns. To attempt to understand these perceptions, it is necessary to look at the broader picture of the existence of Albanian immigrants on the island of Zakynthos.

As a matter of fact, the current context on Zakynthos does not seem to favor a smooth course of integration of Albanians, and thereby does not create the stable kind of environment that is needed for migrants to find the courage to take steps to improve their housing conditions. On the one hand, the carelessness of the (local) government with regard to migrants housing gives them the freedom to choose wherever they want to live – they are not restricted to specific dwellings or neighborhoods reserved for social housing. On the other hand, this so-called ‘freedom’ is now confined within the limits of their economic and social capital / ‘modes of integration’.

Considering the way the local economy is currently structured – pushing migrant labor forces to take on unskilled and undeclared forms of employment – the average economic bargaining power of Albanian immigrants is not likely to gain much strength. However, the financial aspect of their integration was not the most problematic issue with regard to their housing. In fact, the budget dedicated to rent/housing conditions by the Albanian sample should have been able to get them to live in decent living conditions considering the average prices on the housing market in Zakynthos Town. Yet, that they paid more/less rent, in the end, did not mean they were also more/less satisfied with their housing accommodation or that the state of the house was necessarily better/worse than others. No wonder the rental prices paid by the Albanian interviewees therefore generally stayed within a fairly standardized and limited price range with respect to their civil state – they simply did not seem to see there to be any point in enlarging their budget for housing.

Notwithstanding, if interviewees had been on the island since a longer period of time they generally appeared to be slightly more satisfied with their housing conditions as well. The fundamental asset in the level of their satisfaction though was not so much related to a greater financial input as it was to whether or not they knew the necessary social contacts that were able to offer them relatively better house for a similar price. In this respect, with an eye on future progress in particular, it was rather troublesome to notice that society at large does not appear to be (come) especially welcoming towards Albanian migrants in Zakynthos Town. As a result, the numbers of Albanians that are actually able to set up these kinds of networks/connections are increasingly restricted. At the same time, Albanians are not yet soundly cooperating amongst each other either, especially not as far as their housing is concerned. Thus, not only they cannot really rely on the hosting society to build up sufficient social capital to facilitate any transactions on a private housing market, but, as of yet, they do not truly seem to be able to rely on their own community either.

I wish to stress the fact that Albanians – the way I experienced them – are generally not people that like to complain. Instead, they typically came across as strong individual personalities that are determined to make it on their own. In fact, during the interviews, never did they present their housing situation as something truly dramatic. Overall, they seem to be happy to be living in Zakynthos Town. Although things may not always be perfect for all of them, on the whole they still seem to feel they are better off on Zakynthos than they would be in Albania. Nevertheless, in view of their current housing situation, in my opinion, there is reason to be severely concerned about any future course of developments.

At the moment, if Albanian migrants were to endeavor an improvement of their housing conditions, they are pretty much left to wage an individual battle against global pressures. All in all, the interplay of forces that is presently shaping and exerting pressure on the housing pattern of Albanian immigrants in Zakynthos Town is not foreseeing a particularly bright outlook. Nonetheless, spatial segregation in cities according to ethnic boundaries has proven to be detrimental to a successful integration of immigrants – it can easily trap them into a vicious circle of progressively worsening social, economic, and even political conditions. It is therefore of utmost importance that actions are taken to stop the general housing situation of Albanian immigrants in Zakynthos Town from any further disintegration – a direction it seems to be headed rapidly!

SUGGESTIONS for FURTHER RESEARCH

It would be fairly easy to come up with a zillion different policy recommendations to try and ameliorate the spatial integration of Albanians in Zakynthos, especially as no action seems to be taken in Greece at all at the moment with regard to this issue. Still, the solution to the housing situation of Albanian immigrants is not one. To improve their living situation, Greece has to address a variety of issues – of social, economic, and political natures – all of which require further investigations. The most immediate solution to the housing situation of Albanian immigrants on Zakynthos would perhaps be for Greece to design a subsidized housing policy that truly targets those people that are struggling most in making ends meet – those who are living on or below an established national poverty line. One that does not – as opposed to the current policy – exclusively depend upon a person's vocational history in Greece. However, we must remember that this is indeed Greece we are dealing with – it is a country with a specific political structure, economy, and society. With regard to suggestions for improvement, it is therefore all the more important not to focus on what ideas sound great in theory and in principle, but on those that are practically and realistically feasible considering this particular context.

This said, first and foremost, there is an overall need for accurate statistical data on immigrants in Greece in general, and then in particular an urgent requirement to assess the number/situation of illegal immigrants – mainly because these people too are making additional demands on the local housing markets, uncontrollably altering the opportunities for those of which the whereabouts are actually known! Secondly, detailed (quantitative and qualitative) research needs to address the state and location of the dwellings inhabited by migrants in Greece so as to properly evaluate the level of segregation in urban and rural/island regions according to meticulous indices.

In fact, research on the housing situation of immigrants in Greece is really still in its infancy. So far, very little attention has been paid to this particular facet of immigration in Southern Europe in general. Besides, due to the fact that such intense rates of migration to Southern Europe are a fairly recent phenomenon, most relevant scientific research on migrants' residential patterns has been focusing on the separate consequences of the economic, political, or social aspects of the integration of immigrants, commonly disregarding what I have been referring to as the spatial aspect of their migratory move. I here wish to recall that I adopted the term 'spatial' integration in a deliberate attempt to highlight the significance of socio-cultural factors for an integrated interpretation of the distribution and the conditions of immigrant housing. At a time that the welfare state is being curtailed and incomes are rendered unstable, locally rooted social networks represent an important form of (social) capital on which both natives and immigrants rely for knowledge and assistance, also with regard to the housing market. Especially now that there seems to be growing discrepancy between the view of national governments and that of society at large, it is all the more important to recognize the impact of micro-dynamics that are at play in a specific context on the patterns of spatial integration of immigrants, as these have shown to develop a logic of their own.

All in all, especially in view of the rather worrisome results that became evident throughout this particular case-study, I wish to stress the urgency for further research specifically aimed at immigrant housing issues in Greece. It is an area that has up until now largely been neglected by scientific research, yet at the same time, one in which a lot of improvement needs to be encouraged without delay. In my opinion, it is an absolute necessity that action is undertaken now before things get out of hand! Especially in Greece, where the housing market is entirely confided into the hands of economic forces, it is fundamental that the government finds a constructive way to intervene so as to avoid the spatial marginalization and the deterioration of the housing conditions of the most vulnerable segments of society – including immigrants – who are, for one reason or another, not able on their own to face the highly competitive forces of a liberalizing economy and/or the associated fractionating societal dynamics.

Hence, in my opinion, it is necessary for scientific research to look at migrant housing patterns from an integrated perspective where their housing conditions are acknowledged to be reflective of their respective levels of economic, political, and social integration – a perspective that, as opposed to using the term in allusion to a superficial notion of ‘integrality’, truly applies the adjective ‘social’ in explicit connotation to the socio-cultural aspects that affect individual housing patterns. In fact, what this research showed is that, to be able to understand and possibly meet the specific housing demands of various migrant groups that come to settle in Greece, extensive research needs to be done on the differing needs and desires of the migrants in different phases of their lives and at various stages of their stay on the island. (i.e.: single vs. families; short term vs. long term settlement; forms of employment/career; etc.). In this respect, a proper ‘lifestyle perspective’ to migrant housing patterns – an interpretation that has a specific analytical focus on individual preferences and choices (concerning housing), but that is simultaneously attempting to relativize these social micro-dynamics within a contextualized framework of structural economic and political constraints/opportunities – would certainly reveal captivating and illuminating insights (in Greece and elsewhere for that matter!).

To conclude, in reference to Nigel Thrift’s opening quote (*see p.3*), I feel it is time for some ‘adventurousness’ in geography indeed! As contemporary social scientists I believe human geographers simply cannot hide away from these interdisciplinary days anymore. Surely, this does not make the study of people, societal phenomena, and their relationships with space any easier. Still, to keep pace with the ‘modern’ world we inhabit, ‘postmodern’ social scientists have no alternative but to recognize such forms of ‘complexity’ and somehow incorporate any ensuing complications in their analytical ‘views of the world’ to the best of their abilities... Well then, who is up for a challenge?

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GLOSSARY

- **Dimos** = Municipality
- **Dimarchio** = Town Hall
- **IKA** – Idryma Koinonikon Asfaliseon = Social Insurance Institute
- **Kafeneio** = Coffee house, Café
- **OAED** – Organismos Apasholiseos Ergatikou Dynamikou = Greek Manpower Employment Organization
- **OEK** – Organismos Ergatikis Katoikias = Workers Housing Organization
- **Panigiri(a)** = Festival, (Traditional/Holy) Feast
- **Papaki** = Scooter
- **Periptero** = Street Kiosk
- **Psistaria** = Grill Restaurant
- **Nomos** = Prefecture
- **Nomarchia** = Prefectural Hall
- **Periferia** = Regional Government

ANNEX I – Questions for Albanian Interviewees

Individual Background:

1. (Name / Age?) Since when are you in Greece / Zakynthos?
2. Why did you choose to come here / leave Albania?
3. How come you settled in Zakynthos in particular rather than somewhere else in Greece?
4. Do you plan to go back to Albania (sooner or later)?
5. Did you come here alone or did any relatives of yours come with you too?
6. Did any relatives join you here later after you had settled?
7. Are you married (to another Albanian person)?
8. Children? In what language do you speak to your children?

Housing Aspects:

9. Do you rent or own the house you live in? In case, how much do you pay for rent?
10. How did you go about finding a place to stay? Did you find a place to live on your own or did you get help from other Albanians / Greeks?
11. (If renting) Do you aspire / intend to buy your own house on this island one day?
12. Can you describe the property? Where is it? Who do you live with in this property?
13. Are you satisfied with your housing accommodation? (Sq. meters, heating, etc.)
14. Do you work in your own neighborhood? If not, how far away do you work?
15. Are you satisfied with your neighborhood? (i.e. provision / adequacy of nearby services?)
16. Were you ever refused (on grounds of your nationality) when looking for housing?
17. Do you think there is a residential pattern for migrants (on the rise) here? (i.e. 'posh areas vs 'working-class' areas?)
18. Are you generally content with your living conditions on this island?

Economic Aspects:

19. What job(s) do you do on this island? (past and present experiences)
20. What job did you do in Albania?
21. What are your qualifications? (Studies, degrees, specializations?)
22. Do you think you are working below your qualifications?
23. Do you consider your working conditions to be fair?
24. Rate of Pay?
25. Do you feel you are treated equally to Greek people in your working environment?
26. Do you struggle getting around with your budget?
27. Do you think Albanians generally face greater financial struggles than Greek people on this island?

Political Aspects:

28. Was it difficult for you to obtain residence / working permits? How long did it take?
29. Do you receive social assistance / housing benefits / health insurance?
30. Do you believe you were discriminated at any point during application procedures?
31. Do you want / plan to apply for Greek citizenship?
32. Are you a member of any local Albanian association? Do they provide any support?

Social Aspects:

33. What do you like doing in your free time? Do you go out? If so, where?
34. In your free time, do you mostly hang out with other Albanians or with Greeks?
35. Do you ever feel unwanted in particular places in Town? Do your children face difficulties in school? (Teasing? Language? Need for extra schooling?)
36. Do you feel that Greeks and Albanians are living (spatially) separated lives on Zakynthos? (i.e. separate use of social / public spaces)
37. If anything should ever happen to you, who would you turn to for help / support: to other Albanians or to Greeks?

General Questions:

38. Do you think it is easier for Albanian immigrants to integrate on an island such as Zakynthos than it is in any other major cities in Greece (i.e. Athens, Thessalonica)?
39. Why do you think Greeks tend to be prejudiced towards Albanians in particular?
40. If you had the ability to change / improve anything related to your existence in Greece/Zakynthos (be it in labor market, society, political organization, housing market, etc.), what would that be?

ANNEX II – Appendix Albanian Interviewees

	GENDER	AGE	ON ZAKYNTHOS SINCE...	CIVIL STATE	OCCUPATION
1	Male	43	1997	Married	Agriculture
2	Male	31	2000	Married	Construction
3	Male	32	2000	Single	Construction
4	Male	28	2003	Single	Construction
5	Female	32	1999	Married	Grocery Shop Assistant
6	Female	29	2001	Married	Cleaning Hotels
7	Female	28	2003	Married	Waitress
8	Male	39	1997	Married	Construction
9	Male	27	2003	Single	Construction
10	Male	24	2004	Single	Construction
11	Male	46	1994	Married	Restaurant Owner
12	Male	42	1998	Married	Construction
13	Male	26	2003	Single	Construction
14	Male	23	2003	Single	Construction
15	Male	28	2001	Single	Agriculture
16	Female	24	2002	Married	Cleaning Homes
17	Male	29	1999	Married	Construction
18	Male	29	2001	Single	Construction
19	Female	25	2004	Married	Waitress
20	Female	31	1997	Married	Bakery Salesperson
21	Male	31	1998	Married	Hardware Store Ass.
22	Male	27	2000	Single	Hardware Store Ass.
23	Male	30	1999	Married	Agriculture
24	Male	48	1996	Married	Construction
25	Male	24	1998	Single	Construction
26	Female	23	2004	Married	-
27	Male	26	1999	Single	Construction
28	Male	29	2002	Single	Construction
29	Male	23	2002	Single	Agriculture
30	Male	29	1999	Married	Agriculture
31	Male	44	1998	Married	Discount Shop Ass.
32	Male	40	1999	Single	Construction
33	Male	28	1998	Single	Construction
34	Male	29	2000	Married	Construction
35	Male	30	2002	Single	Construction

36	Female	26	2002	Single	Waitress
37	Male	27	2000	Single	Construction
38	Female	37	1998	Married	Cleaning Supermarket
39	Female	28	2003	Single	Caretaker Disabled
40	Male	36	1997	Married	Agriculture
41	Male	34	1997	Married	Agriculture
42	Male	26	2000	Single	Agriculture
43	Male	33	1999	Single	Construction
44	Male	29	2002	Single	Construction
45	Male	30	2001	Single	Construction
46	Male	31	1999	Single	Bouncer
47	Male	33	1998	Married	Agriculture
48	Female	28	1999	Married	Cleaning Homes
49	Female	26	2002	Married	Waitress
50	Female	26	2003	Married	-
51	Female	27	2002	Married	-
52	Male	44	1998	Married	Construction
53	Male	40	1999	Widower	Construction
54	Female	32	1999	Widow	Caretaker Elderly
55	Male	34	1999	Married	Agriculture
56	Male	29	2000	Single	Construction
57	Male	33	1997	Married	Construction
58	Male	25	2001	Married	Construction
59	Male	29	1999	Married	Agriculture
60	Female	29	2001	Married	Cleaning Homes
61	Male	26	2002	Single	Agriculture
62	Male	37	1999	Single	Construction
63	Male	30	2001	Single	Construction

ANNEX III – Questions for Native Interviewees

REAL ESTATE AGENTS

- In how many and which neighborhoods is Zakynthos Town divided?
- How many houses are privately owned and how many houses are rented?
- Ask about the average prices of different types of houses, for rent and for sale.
- Where are the most expensive/nicest houses and where are the cheaper ones?
- Average equipment of houses? i.e. kitchen, bathroom, central heating?
- Is there a division between posh & working class neighborhoods in Town?

PUBLIC OFFICIALS – regardless of the position they filled or the institute/organization they were part of – were asked a set of common questions. These included:

- How do you think Zakynthos is dealing with the influx of so many immigrants, especially in terms of their housing?
- Do you think immigrants are well integrated into society on this island?
- Do you somehow feel threatened by the presence of these large numbers of immigrants?
- Have you ever had to work with Albanian immigrants? If so, how did you experience this co-operation?
- Do you hang out with Albanians in your free time?
- Do you feel natives and foreign immigrants are living segregated lives on this island?

Additionally, specific questions were then formulated according to their individual functions.

ANNEX IV – Zakynthian Housing Standards

NATIONAL STATISTICAL SERVICE OF GREECE – ATHENA 2001 DATA RESULTS

Regular dwellings by available number of rooms

Geographic Region	2001 De facto Population							
	Regular dwellings							
	Total	Total number of rooms		Regular dwellings				
		in regular dwellings	used as home offices in regular dwellings	with 1 room	with 2 rooms	with 3 rooms	with 4 rooms	with over 5 rooms
IONIA ISLANDS	130.942	493.240	925	5.848	18.330	31.919	40.151	34.894
NOMOS ZAKYNTHOU	19.647	79.652	159	460	1.738	4.351	6.661	6.437

Regular dwellings by type of basic facilities

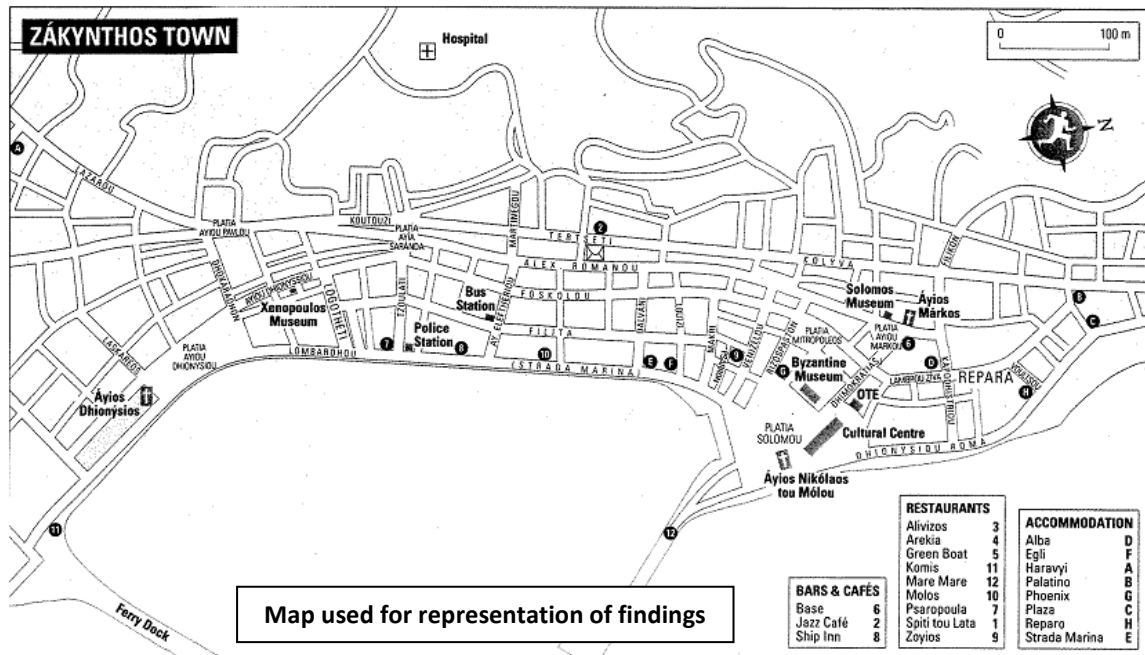
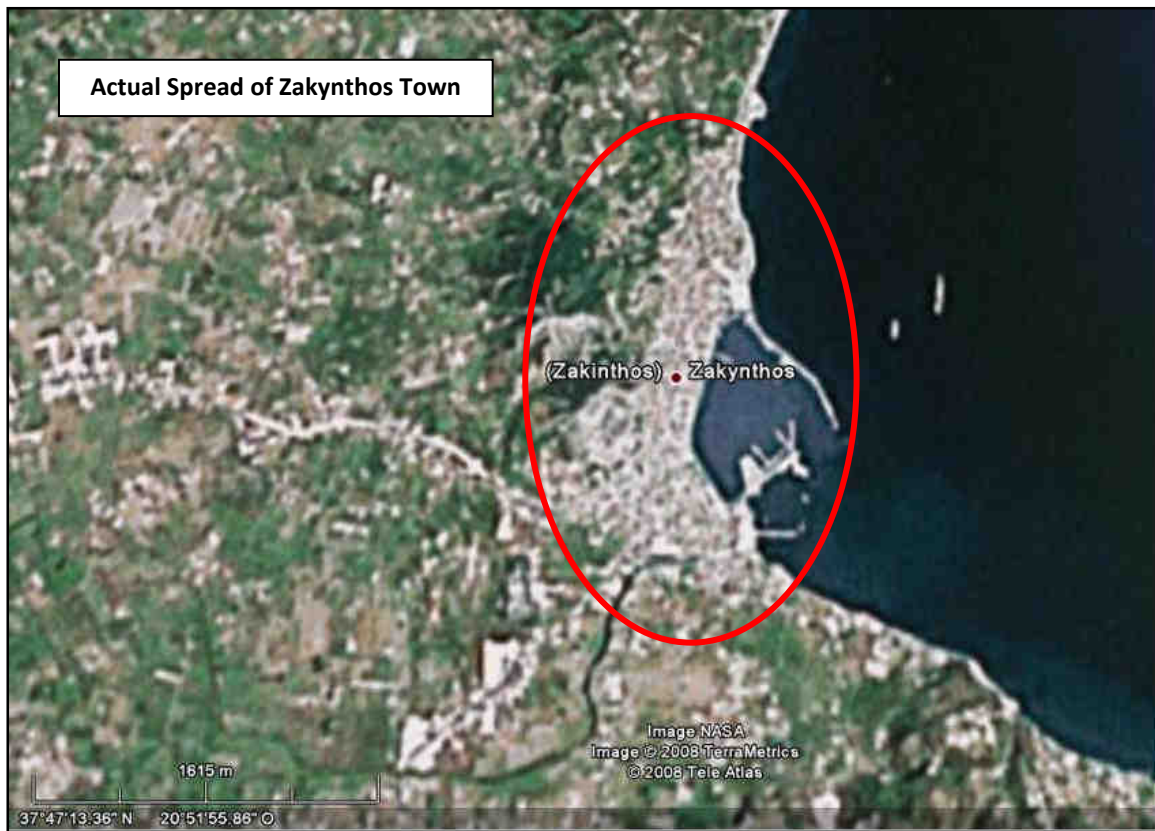
Geographic Region	2001 De facto Population			
	Regular dwellings			
	Total	with kitchen	with bathroom or shower	with central heating
IONIA ISLANDS	130.942	128.536	124.233	40.715
NOMOS ZAKYNTHOU	19.647	19.310	18.706	7.440

Households by size and household members residing in regular housing units by the number of rooms available to the household

NOMOS ZAK YNTHOU

	2001 De facto Population	
	Households	Members
Households total	12.423	37.318
1 room	286	
2 rooms	873	
3 rooms	2.318	
4 rooms	4.186	
5 rooms	3.012	
over 6 rooms	1.748	
Households with 1 member	2.023	2.023
1 room	138	
2 rooms	293	
3 rooms	525	
4 rooms	664	
5 rooms	278	
over 6 rooms	125	
Households with 2 members	3.293	6.586
1 room	82	
2 rooms	260	
3 rooms	765	
4 rooms	1.162	
5 rooms	712	
over 6 rooms	312	
Households with 3 members	2.676	8.028
1 room	34	
2 rooms	157	
3 rooms	444	
4 rooms	996	
5 rooms	683	
over 6 rooms	362	
Households with 4 members	2.584	10.336
1 room	24	
2 rooms	116	
3 rooms	391	
4 rooms	885	
5 rooms	757	
over 6 rooms	411	
Households with 5 members	1.117	5.586
1 room	8	
2 rooms	33	
3 rooms	140	
4 rooms	310	
5 rooms	352	
over 6 rooms	274	
Households with over 6 members	730	4.760
1 room	0	
2 rooms	14	
3 rooms	53	
4 rooms	169	
5 rooms	230	
over 6 rooms	264	

ANNEX V – Comparing Maps



Case-Study:
The SPATIAL INTEGRATION of ALBANIAN IMMIGRANTS on ZAKYNTHOS
– An Integrated Understanding of Local Dynamics –

ERRATA

(Corrections marked in red)

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Table 2 – Rental Prices paid by Interviewees

Monthly Rent (*) (in Euros)	# of Individuals	# of Households
< 100	13	-
100 ≤ 200	12	2
200 ≤ 300	3	10
300 ≤ 400	-	13
Unknown	9	
Total	62	

(*) When discussing 'rental prices' in Greece, this is usually excluding any additional charges for water, electricity, etc. With regard to the figures in this table, please note that the rental prices related to the households generally indeed exclude these charges (meaning the total cost paid for their house is effectively slightly higher than what is stated here). Instead, amongst the individual renters, the respective prices were mostly said to be all inclusive.

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"I pay more than 400 Euros a month for rent (including charges), that's a lot of money! At least the landlord could make sure everything is in order no?! But it is not like that! It's been almost a month now that we've been having problems with hot water in the shower and I've asked him to come and look at it, and he keeps saying yes yes I'm coming, but then he never comes... I think he doesn't want to pay for any reparations. If it is the solar panel that is broken it is going to cost him quite a bit of money... I'm almost sure that if he ever comes he is going to try and make us to pay for whatever needs to be fixed...!"

(Interviewee nr. 17)