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Circular Migration and the Greek – Albanian border

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Migration in Greece:

- During the last twenty years, Greece has received significant numbers of migrants that have transformed the country.
 - From a migrant sending to a migrant receiving country.
 - Main reason the collapse of the Communist Regimes in neighboring Balkan countries.
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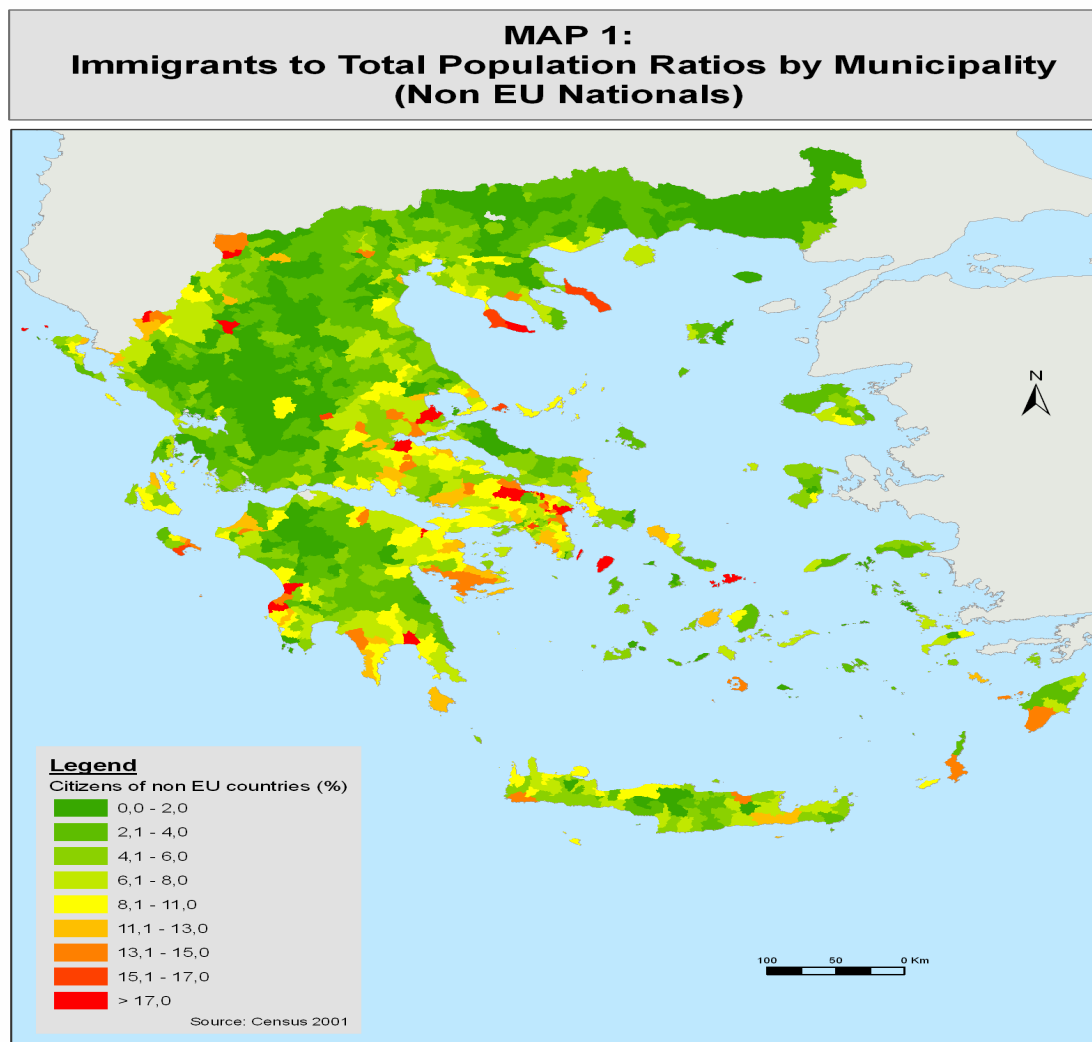
Some Facts:

- According to the 2001 Population Census there were 762.000 migrants in Greece or 7% of the total population of the country.
- According to some more recent estimates, the number of migrants might be as high as 1.000.000 people (or even more).
- In terms of countries of origin, Albanian nationals comprise 56% of the total migrant population (this is unique in relation to any other EU member-state). Bulgarian nationals constitute 5%, Georgians 3% and Romanians 3%.
- Greek – Albanian border: an external EU border. Greek – Bulgarian border an external EU border that became internal.

Age & Gender:

- 80% of migrants are between the age of 15 to 64, compared to 68% of Greeks. The migrant stock is younger than the native stock and they tend to have more children than the natives.
- Gender discrepancies among the various migrant groups. Migrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh and India are almost exclusively male. Migrants from Philippines, Ukraine and Moldova are mostly female. On the other hand, migrants from Albania and other Balkan countries are more or less balanced in terms of gender.

Patterns of Spatial Settlement:



Source: Institute of Urban Environment and Human Resources (2004) - Panteion University of Athens (Research Commissioned by IMEPO)

Highest densities of non-EU migrant populations (migrant spatial concentration):

- The centre of Athens and some other parts of its broader metropolitan area (high demand for unskilled and semi-labour).
- Some islands both in the Aegean and the Ionian Sea: Mykonos, Kea, Skiathos, Zakynthos (tourist development creates demand for 'flexible' labour).
- Some mountainous areas near the Greek – Albanian border, with exclusively Albanian populations.

Labour market participation:

An Ethnic division of labour? Migrants usually do manual, unskilled, semi-skilled jobs that the natives are not interested in (*a segmented labour market*).

- According to the 2001 Population Census, 413.000 migrants declared that they came to Greece to work.
- Albanians 240.000 (58%), Bulgarians 28.000 (6.8%), Romanians 17.000 (4%).
- A gendered division of labour? Men, are mostly employed in construction, agriculture, manufacturing, tourism. Women, on the other hand are mainly employed in domestic services, and to lesser degree in agriculture and tourism.

Focusing on the Greek – Albanian Border

Albanian Migration:

- Since 1990, almost one fifth of the total population has left the country.
- Four main types of migration.
 - Internal migration from rural to urban areas
 - Short term international migration (temporal) almost exclusively to Greece
 - Long term migration to Greece and Italy
 - A new route: Long term migration to USA and Canada

Temporary International Migration: Albanian Living Standards Measurement Study Survey (Albanian Institute of Statistics 2002):

- Greece is by far the most important destination country (80%), followed by Italy.
- Temporary migrants to Greece often come from rural areas in the northern and central part of the country.
- They tend to be young males (83%) that are less educated than the non-migrants.

Municipalities of Konitsa and Mastorochoia (Epirus Region):

Research carried out by Kasimis, Nitsiakos, Zagopoulou, Papadopoulos (2002)

- In these areas there is a big demographic problem. The local economy needs migrant labour.
 - The multifunctional role of migrants in these areas (agriculture, construction, care to the elders).
 - In these two areas, it appeared that 31% of the households employed migrants (always according to the sample).
 - Migrants are responsible for the surviving and preservation of local farming and stock breeding industries.
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The rise to dominance of the circular migration discourse:

- Circular migration is not a new practice or concept. Historically, many forms of migration were of a circular nature, while at the same time, many of them continue to be so at present. What is new, is the interest of governments and international organizations on the topic.
 - Instead of permanent or/and temporary, circular migration.
 - A new focus on Migration and trans-nationalism (being here and there). Link between trans-nationalism and development through remittances (transnational money) and transfer of skills (Vertovec 2007).
 - A three win situation: Migrant sending (development), migrant receiving (labour shortages) countries and the migrants themselves (bettering themselves).
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- EU 2005: ‘Communication on Migration and Development: Some concrete orientations’ High-skilled (brain circulation) and un-skilled circular migration.
 - 2005 Global Commission on International Migration: “The need to grasp the developmental opportunities (of temporary and circular migration)....for the countries of origin”.
 - 2006 ‘World Bank Report: Migration and Remittances – Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union’. The report promotes circular migration as a viable alternative to illegal migration, brain drain and long term separation of families.
 - October 2006: EU Informal Meeting in Stratford Upon Avon, the German and French Interior Ministers proposed the opening up of EU’s labour market to workers who are willing to follow circular migration patterns.
 - In short, at the moment circular migration is perceived as the prime tool for managing migration.
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The circular migration debate along the border:

- **Albanian National Strategy on Migration.**

“Albanians should have a chance to work and study abroad legally. Emigration should however not be permanent. Emigrants, should be attracted to return to their country and contribute to its social and economic development. This kind of temporary migration is called circular migration”.

- **General Secretary of Epirus Region (personal communication).**

“We need people (migrants), we need people to bring these areas back to life again”

From the trans-national to the trans-local?

J. Chaloff (2005)

“Migratory chains often link specific areas in sending countries to specific areas (towns) in host countries. Co-development links can therefore be made between specific and circumscribed groups moving back and forth between limited areas ”.

The potential of border-regions to create trans-local links. A trans-local labour market?
