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### From the village to the city

Caro, Erka

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# 9

## **EXPLORING LINKS BETWEEN INTERNAL AND INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION IN ALBANIA**

**A View from Internal Migrants**

## **ABSTRACT**

Over the last twenty years Albania has experienced sweeping economic and social changes, caused in part by increasing internal and international migration flows. Migration trajectories of Albanians represent a combination of internal, international and return migration. Whereas scholars have previously focused mainly on international migration, the current research explores the dynamics between internal and international migration. Typically, the internal migration of a family is supported, psychologically and financially, by the international migration of other household members. This paper reports on the influence that social and economic remittances have on the livelihoods of internal migrants. Using an ethnographic approach, financial and social remittances were shown to improve internal migrants' quality of life, assisting their adjustment process.

## 9.1 Introduction

'Albania is a country on the move' both internally and internationally (Carletto et al. 2006:767). Migration is one of the most important social and economic phenomena to emerge since the 1990s in Albania, and is regarded as a key livelihood strategy for coping with unemployment, poverty and transition hardship (Carletto et al. 2004; Nicholson 2002; 2004; De Soto et al. 2002; Cila, 2006; King, 2003; Vullnetari, 2007; Çaro and van Wissen, 2007). The magnitude of the observed migration flows, given the time frame and the size of the Albanian population, are substantial. More than one-fifth of the total population is living abroad, while more than eight percent of the population has moved within the country (INSTAT 2001, 2004; Carletto et al. 2004).

Given these trends, in Albania it is surprising that internal migration and the interrelation between internal and international movements appears under-researched (King et al. 2008; Çaro and van Wissen, 2008; King and Vullnetari, 2003). Migration trajectories are becoming more complex (King et al. 2008); however, one migration form is often studied without reference to the other, making the current understanding of migration phenomena incomplete (King et al. 2008; Skeldon, 2006). In line with King et al. (2008) and Vullnetari (2009) this paper argues that there is not only potential for, but also an emerging need to integrate the study of internal and international migration. From empirical evidence regarding Albanian migration there appears to be an explicit dimension to the intertwining of internal and international migration trajectories as part of household livelihood strategies.

Emigrants move with an intention to stay abroad temporarily while internal migrants move with the intention to remain. People leave their villages as a family and settle in a larger city. This family move is often facilitated by the financial and social remittances of the family member who moved abroad (usually the husband or an adult son). The role played by financial and social remittances in the migration and adjustment process has long been recognized in the field of migration studies (Boyd, 1990; Portes and Rumbaut, 1990; Gurak and Caces, 1992; Zhou, 1997; Korac, 2001; Krissman, 2005; Levitt, 1989). Family ties are often seen as sources of social and economic capital, mediators of chain migration or as transnational networks that connect the family members left behind in the place of origin and those at the new destination/s (Massey et al. 1987; Portes, 1995; Levitt, 2001; McLellan and White, 2005).

On the one hand, social and financial remittances are regarded as an important source of capital which can facilitate the migration and adjustment process of internal migrants, improving quality of life (such as better housing and living conditions). Social and financial remittances do supply newcomers with assistance, information and access to housing (Portes and Zhou, 1993; Korac, 2001; Aquilera and Massey, 2003). On the other hand, financial remittances could create economic dependence for the migrant community, impeding their

integration to urban life (Aguilera, 2002; Hondegneu-Sotelo, 2001; Krissman, 2005; Cranford, 2005).

The main goal of this research was to investigate the connections between international and internal migration through social and financial remittances and the role these remittances play in shaping the livelihoods of internal migrants in their new environment. Using an ethnographic approach, financial remittances were viewed as a means for improving living conditions, economic security and physical capital. Social remittances were examined in terms of their role in the development and empowerment of internal migrants, and their community, in their new environment. In recognition of the complexity of migrant household livelihoods, this paper illustrates the diverse ways that households make use of international migration to achieve their own move from village to city to construct a livelihood.

## **9.2 Theoretical considerations**

According to King and Skeledon (2010), there have been few attempts to theoretically link internal and international migration. Thomas (1954), Zelinsky (1971; 1983; 1993) and Pryor (1981) worked to integrate internal and international migration theories into a single framework. However, these approaches shown some limitations (King et al. 2008: 1630) and have received criticism (Boyle et al. 1998; Cadwallader, 1993). King and Skeldon (2010) call for more focus on interrelating internal and international migration on theoretical basis; however, they accept that the construction of an all-inclusive theory for all types of migration is impossible. Nevertheless, there remains a need to interlink the empirical evidence on theoretical grounds. King and Skeledon (2010) suggest an incorporation of elements from different theoretical frameworks of migration. More specifically: (a) the systems approach – applied mainly to the study of internal migration and then too to international migration; (b) integration theory – traditionally applied to international migrants, with only a few attempts having been made to apply it to internal migrants; and (c) the debate on migration and development, which has the potential to bring both internal and international migration closer (King et al. 2008: 34).

According to a framework developed by Fawcett (1989) regarding linkages in the migration system, the financial and social remittances, gifts, written communications and care that flow between journey destination and origin constitute the category of ‘Tangible/Family and Personal Networks’ (p. 674). These connections produced amidst international and internal migration can shape the migration process in different ways (Fawcett, 1989). The current research is based on migration network theory (Boynd, 1989; Entzinger, 2003). The theory suggests that the migrants’ networks focus on important sources of information, financial and social support (Arango, 2000; de Haan, 2000), and even a perceived reduction in vulnerability (Meikle, 2002). Family relations have an enduring impact on migration (Fawcett, 1989). These relationships influence not only the migration decision-making process within a family, much of which occurs at the household rather than the individual level (Vullnetari,

2007), but also the settling process and livelihood at the destination (Çaro et al.2010). Massey (1990) suggests that social networks and remittances are based on culturally determined kinship obligations, and that they serve the interests of both non-migrants and migrants, thereby becoming self-enforcing.

The current analyses focus on financial and social capital, which internal migrants gain from international migrants. According to the new economics of migration theory by Stark and Bloom (1985: 174) migration creates new forms of social capital, both in the destination and across space (multi-spatial), and the migration decisions are often made in agreement within the household by both migrants and non-migrants. Hence the costs and benefits of migration are shared between the migrant and those left behind in the form of remittances often regarded as an 'inter-temporal contractual arrangement between the migrant and the family' (p. 174).

While there is abundant literature regarding financial remittances, the issue of social remittances has been neglected (Hugo, 2005; Piper, 2005; Vullnetari, 2009; McKenzie and Menjivar, 2011). Social remittances are defined by Levitt (1998) as 'cultural diffusion in forms of ideas, behavior, identities, and social capital that flow from receiving to sending countries communities' (p. 927). Social remittances generate 'transnational communities' (Levitt, 1996; Goldring, 1992; Portes, 1996), and ties. In the long term, social transfers can be even more important than financial transfers (Kapur, 2004, cited in Vullnetari, 2009).

### **9.3 Exploring linkages among international and internal migration in Albania**

One of the main features of the communist period in Albania was the controlled mobility of the population, where international migration was forbidden. During the communist regime, the internal migration flows were directed according to the state's ideological policy of populating the most rural areas. King (2004) argued that the denial of emigration by the communist regime was a key factor in the keenness of Albanians to exercise this fundamental immediately after 1990. Both internal and international migrations provide an important strategy for coping with difficult economic, political and social conditions. Emigration, which leads to a decline of the national population, and internal migration which results in unprecedented spatial disparities, are two phenomena which happened together in Albania. International migration ultimately finances internal migration to a new locale seen as more desirable for the individual's and the family's future (King and Vullnetari, 2003; King 2004; 2005; King et al. 2008; Çaro and van Wissen, 2007). Usually this is a place either within, or in the vicinity of a major economic centre such as Tirana, Durrës, Vlorë or Elbasan.

Albanian emigration represents the largest outflow relative to population of any transitional economy (Castaldo et al. 2005). It has been estimated that on average, each family has had at least one of its members experience emigration (Gërmenji and Swinnen, 2005; INSTAT, 2001). In the Albanian context, emigration is seen not only as a social element but also as very important economically. According to UNDP (2000) Albania is a country heavily

dependent on remittances. Remittances in Albania have been continuously growing since 1992, from ten to 22 percent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) (Bank of Albania 2008). They have exceeded the amount of foreign direct investment (FDI), exports and the amount of aid received from international institutions (BoA, 2008; INSTAT, 2002). Remittances for recipient households can represent up to 47 percent of the household income (IMF, 2005, International Monetary Fund). Data from surveys and migration-related questionnaires (INSTAT, 2001; ALSMS 2002; Nicholson, 2002; Labriandids and Hatziprokopiou, 2005), indicate that people intend to return after a few years of working in another country. Moreover, the decision to migrate can form part of a wider movement plan going back and forth, perhaps depending upon work (i.e. moving to Greece and Italy). Most emigrants aim to save enough money to establish a better life for themselves and their families back home. According to Labrianidis and Kazazi (2006), the performance of migrants after their return can be a contentious issue. There is speculation about whether Albanian migrants who return are seen as 'failures' or 'successes' (King, 2005). From a theoretical perspective, neoclassical economic theory suggests that migrants who return have failed, as they were not able to realize the expected gains in income (Harris and Todaro, 1970; Todaro, 1976) On the contrary, the new economics theory of labour migration implies that return migrants concentrate on integrating into the labour force to bring back financial and social capital, and to be regarded as successes (Stark and Bloom, 1985).

According to Nicholson (2004), returned migrants deliver cost-effective development and bring back new skills and ideas to establish new businesses. Nevertheless, King (2005) has pointed out that the situation is different if you compare southern Albania with the more remote northern region. According to Barjaba (2000), the returnees are those individuals unable to integrate into the receiving countries, while the scale of the emigrant's investments is bound to be modest. Labrinidies et al. (2004), points out that the rate of owner-occupied properties rose from 85.2 percent to 92.3 percent upon the return of the emigrants. Furthermore, the longer a migrant stays abroad, the more likely he or she is to become a business owner: a larger proportion become employer on return (67.1 percent of men, 25.8 percent of women) (Labrinidies et al. 2004).

Apart from emigration, there has also been a strong pattern of movement from rural to urban areas. According to the Government of Albania (2005), around 600,000 Albanians moved to Greece, and according to the Italian Statistics Office (ISTAT, 2006), around 400,000 to Italy. On return to their country of origin, migrants tend to settle in the most prosperous areas (King, 2004). In Albania, this means in Tirana and its suburbs, usually followed by the migration of the other family members who did not go abroad. According to INSTAT (2004), 12 percent of the internal migrants are retirees and more than 25 percent are female housekeepers, advancing the belief that longevity can only be achieved by joining a family that has already moved or by relying on financial support from abroad. Considering internal and international migration from a historical perspective, there is a relationship between the time

of emigration, economic growth and internal migration. Following the initial migration 'explosion' when the prior state policy was eased, other troughs and peaks can be linked to Albanian economic and political crises.

#### **9.4 Methodological approach**

This paper focuses on the rural-to-urban movement of households. Research was conducted at seven sites in Kamza Municipality, with sites for the ethnographic study identified during previous pilot research conducted in 2008. Fieldwork was carried out between March and October 2009, consisting of a) a series of in-depth interviews, b) participant observation, and c) visual methods. The adoption of qualitative methods allowed the researcher to construct comprehensive biographies of household migration, and facilitated the identification of transnational channels of communication. This approach permitted a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the lives of those living in Kamza: an approach to migration studies that is rare in Albania (Bërxfholi, 2008, personal communication).

##### *a) In-depth interviews*

In-depth interviewing is considered a privilege, allowing the researcher to communicate extensively with the study participants while gaining an understanding of aspects of their lives (Liamputtong and Ezzy, 2005). We conducted 40 in-depth interviews (22 women and 18 men). All of the respondents had migrated from rural areas to the city in the previous two decades. The migrants had various levels of education and came from different age groups. The interviews were conducted informally in order to build rapport between the researcher and the migrants. In addition to the interviews, around 70 individual and group conversations were also conducted. Three women and two men were the key informants. The other informants were identified using a snowballing technique, starting with the help of social workers operating in the area. The in-depth interviews were carried out in Albanian and tape-recorded with the consent of the respondents. The interviews were transcribed and then analysed using Atlas.ti version 4 software (ATLAS.Ti, 1999). Transcriptions remained in Albanian with the aim of preserving their originality, including metaphors and idiom. The quotations used in the findings were translated into English.

##### *b) Participant Observation*

According to Schensul et al. (1999: 91), 'participant observation represents the starting point in ethnographic research'. Observation was carried out congruent with the approach by DeWalt and DeWalt (2002). The researcher spent time in the community, mainly with women and youths (the men were at work or refused to be involved in discussions with a female researcher). Moreover, the researcher spent a two-month period residing in Kamza to more closely observe daily activities, rituals, interactions and events involving women migrants (e.g. meetings, going shopping, festivities), thereby learning about their culture and daily customs.



Living within the community enabled new insights into the way new migrants behaved and interacted, not afforded by interviews alone.

*c) Visual methods*

This study includes visual material such as photographs taken by the researcher. Visual images are becoming increasingly commonly used by ethnographers as a means to study interactions within their cultural and social context (Pink, 2007; Rose, 2007). The photos in this paper portray the importance that financial and social remittances have on internal migrants' lives. The photographs are taken both in private and in public spaces

## **9.5 Results**

This paper reports on one aspect in particular: the role that international migration plays on the internal migration experience. In Albania there is a complex and diverse range of linkages between different forms of migration and the migrant's family members. Social and financial remittances are recognized as must-haves, essential for internal migration. Remittances facilitate internal migration (Labriandis and Kazazi, 2006) by financing and supporting all aspects of the process. This paper analyses the socioeconomic effects of international migration on internal migrants, through financial and social remittances. The Results section begins with (a) a discussion of the influence family members emigrated abroad have on the migration decision making process of the rest of the family; (b) a discussion of various aspects of financial and social remittances such as wellbeing, security and physical capital; and (c) development and livelihoods. Lastly, some negative aspects of emigration are discussed, such as (d) emotional burden.

### ***Financial Remittances***

*a) 'They wanted us to move' – the decision-making process*

The migration trajectory of a household is typically as follows: usually an adult son of the family moves abroad while the rest of the family remains in the village. He sends money to the family to move nearer to Tirana. Afterwards, he continues to send money to assist the family to settle and visits to help build the house or establish a business. After a period of saving money, he plans to return and reunite with the rest of the family.

Apart from the financial channels, the internal migration decision process is influenced by ties that the family has abroad. Internal migrants spoke of how the decision to move had been triggered by a family member living abroad. One migrant in his early twenties recalls the migration decision process and spoke about this argument as follows:

My brother in England wanted us to move. He wanted me to continue university and my sister to be out of the village environment. He was the main promoter of our migration. If it had been up to my father we would have never moved from the village. He is old and very

traditional, and moreover we were poor. Without Altin's [brother in England] money we would never have made it. His money has supported our complete migration and settling process here. The house here cost a lot of money and all was built with my brother's money. We couldn't afford it. (Male 22)

Financial remittances are the foundation of internal migration and act as resources for finding a location, purchasing land, settling and adjusting. Migrants expressed the importance of financial capital as indispensable assets which play a fundamental role in their lives in the new environment. Most of the migrants associate the settling process with remittances:

If it hadn't been for my brother-in-law we would not have been able to do anything. We would have stayed in *Barak* all our lives. In this house that you see here is all his money and his blood. If it hadn't been for him I don't know what we could have done. (Female 46)

My son in Greece has been very decisive in the investments we made here. We try to make it by ourselves... but in difficult times I always call him. (Male 58)

My son brought us here. He wanted us to come. And of course he helped us economically. At the very beginning we survived only on his money. The house, the land, everything was bought by him. If it had not been for him we would probably have stayed in the village. (Male 49)

*b) 'Emigration has been the state for us' – Physical and financial capital*

Carletto et al. (2004) state that a poor family is considered to be one that does not have a member who can emigrate abroad. Emigration is not only a source of economic prosperity but also of development. Internal migrants spoke of the significance of emigration on their lives and wellbeing. As a way to show gratitude to emigrants who send money, internal migrants display outside their homes the national flag of the country where the emigrants work and where the money comes from (see Figure 9.1).

Emigration is like the state to us. The state did not help us but emigration did. The emigrants brought the money to build houses, to buy furniture and land, to build the streets, the schools and bars. Emigration founded Kamza. All that you see around is the sweat of emigrants, sometimes even their blood or illegal stuff but what can they do? [...] They did everything so that their families could survive.

Everything that you see around has been made possible because of the money from emigration. People who have nobody abroad are poor, have no house. That money [remittances] has been our way out. Only one person provides income and that one person has invested in everything, apart from maintaining the family. This is what emigration means... a whole family can survive on one person... and in good condition, not suffering.

Figure 9.1 Display of transnational care



Photo: Erka Çaro 2008

Throughout Kamza, newly constructed, modern residences are plentiful: all resulting from financial remittances (see Box 1). Moreover, within are contemporary furnishings, fitted kitchens and modern bathrooms.<sup>50</sup> All of these were considered as urban characteristics and sources of aspiration for rural migrants (Vullnetari, 2009). Naxhie (aged 52) talks about the benefits her family received from the emigration of her only son, Arben (aged 33).

Of the benefits of emigration, the most important of all is the money. My son has been an emigrant in Greece for 5 years. All those years he worked a lot and saved a lot. That money brought us here. That money built us a house, that money made our life here easier. We constructed the house as we wanted to, with everything in it, with everything we have been dreaming of. There in the village we had the bathroom outside the home, also the kitchen. In the night I was so afraid to go out in the dark to the toilet that I just didn't [laughs] [...] While here we have it inside the house and not one but two. One is near my son's bedroom and one is in the hall. Being wealthy has helped us live here as people and not as animals [as they consider living in the village]. (Naxhie, 52)

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50 In the villages the bathroom and the kitchen are typically built outdoors and in very poor condition. These were also the main changes that the migrants were proud of. In many instances when I asked if I could use the bathroom, they (usually women) proudly replied to me 'oh of course, it is inside the house and brand new' and came with me to display it to me.

### Box 1. Physical capital and financial remittances

Emigration of family members promotes new living strategies and changes in household management. This is a house built entirely through remittances. The sons (five) were emigrants. Their wives and children lived in the house. The father-in-law was acting as the head of the household. Everybody in the household had precise daily duties. The husbands came twice a year to bring back remittances. None of the household members had a paid job. The income was provided exclusively through remittances. This situation had existed for 10 years.

Figure 9.2 Household with remittances



Photo: Erka Çaro 2008

Remittances do not follow institutional channels and as such are difficult to measure. They are used mainly to finance the settling process and in building a house; however, a second step is for the family to save and to invest the money. Once the family is settled and their house built, the connections with emigration grow weaker: with remittances fading out over a 15–20 year period (Nikas and King, 2005). In order to lessen the potential impact of this disconnection the migrants push their families to save money and to build up a business that will secure their economic wellbeing in the future:

Now that the house is finished we are saving his [the brother abroad] money in order to open a new family business. In this way we can have a good economic base and he can think more about his life there. (Irir 28)

Almost all the investments here and the business having been opened are thanks to the money from emigrants. They have worked for years and years and then have invested here for themselves and their families. It is very difficult to open a business if you have nobody abroad... You have to be crazy brave or do dirty stuff [meaning to sell drugs or steal] (Haxhi 47).

In general in Albania and especially here in Kazma it is very difficult to make it without help from abroad. If you don't have a source like emigration you would always be in debt. I know and I see it everyday here. Those who have people abroad live decently, open businesses, and build houses. It is very easy to understand that they are satisfied with their lives. Those who have nobody abroad are poor, are blacklisted (in debt) in the shops and will never be able to pay their debts (Leta 36).

Moreover, although financial remittances can enhance the wellbeing of internal migrants, facilitating their adjustment process, the economic and social dependence of internal migrants can disturb their interaction with the host society, potentially impeding the full integration of rural migrants to urban life. In women especially, economic dependence on husbands abroad is often seen as a hindrance to their social integration, personal empowerment and independence (Chapter 7).

I feel sad and suffocated; I am not independent, not at all. I want to work, to get out of the house, have friends like other women do, but my husband is an emigrant, he brings a lot of money home, we don't need more money he says. He tells me what do you want to work for? We don't need the trivial sums you could make... You stay home and look after the children, look after my parents [...] I can't even ask for housekeeping money, when I do the groceries, my father in-law asks me to bring the bill back so he can check how much I spent and then ask me for the change... I give him every cent back. If I need to buy something I have to wait for my husband to come and then I can ask him the money. (Mimoza 26)

The remark, 'Remittances made Kamza', is the way to understand how things function in the Kamza migrant community. A house is the most essential physical capital that a migrant can own and is perceived by the rural-to-urban migrants as a symbol of social status. Investing in the construction of a house is seen as an important way of increasing one's wellbeing. The construction of a house implies financial and social costs. As such, the head of the household is often obliged to live abroad for many years in order to earn sufficient money to send back home. Accordingly, the overall perception of the migrant community is the higher the quality and size of the house, the higher the social status of the household. Box 1 shows what it means for internal migrants to receive financial remittances (Box 2 illustrates the opposite).

### Box 2. What does it mean to be poor?

This is the house Naim (48) and his poor household. They have nobody abroad and within migrant community in Kamza this means to be poor. Indeed, the main reason listed by Naim for owning a poorly constructed house was the lack of remittances and having nobody abroad.

Figure 9.3 Household without remittances



Photo: Erka Çaro 2008

### ***Social Remittances***

*a) 'The more one sees the more one learns' – Social remittances and development.*

According to Nyberg Sørensen (2005), the flow of new skills, ideas, practices and learned behaviours through emigrants and returnees from host to original communities can trigger social changes to gender and generational roles, class and social status in the communities of origin (Çaro et al. 2010). Indeed, for internal migrants it is not only a matter of money and wealth but also a matter of modernization, changing traditions, empowerment, and bringing in new skills and technologies. The influence of social remittances in the rural areas under study was multiple. First, it was obvious in the architecture and interior design of residences (see Box 3).

### Box 3. Emigrants applying new skills and technologies

Social and financial remittances have become a source of wellbeing, enabling families to reduce poverty and gain social status. The influence of social remittances can be also seen in the architectural styles of the residences and the features inside the houses, such as central heating or marble floors, or in one case also a small swimming pool. Many of the houses and businesses have been constructed by the emigrants themselves, while in many cases the building materials and architecture were imported from the destination countries.

Figure 9.4 Display of skills and technologies gained from emigrants



Photo: Erka Çaro 2008

Second, on return, emigrants bring with them new skills and technologies and use them to open new businesses (e.g. fast-food shops, hair-styling salons, carpentry workshops). Third, it influences the gender structures and roles in the household. Fourth, especially for young migrants, it means modernization, better education and opportunities and hope for the future. Social remittances have been transmitted via visits but also through phone calls, presents and transnational care. Many of the houses and businesses have been constructed and founded by the emigrants themselves, while on many occasions the building materials were brought from the destination countries. Nasip (58), a father of five sons who all emigrated to Greece explained how the social remittances combined with financial ones had become a source of wellbeing and enabled families to reduce poverty and gain social status.

It is not only money that emigrants bring: they bring development, new ideas, new experiences, new professions. You know, the more one sees the more one learns. My sons have been working in Greece for years now. They earn a lot of money with what they do.

But they want to return and do here what they have learned there. They built the house, actually one of them works in construction in Greece. He came and followed the construction of the house here step-by-step. We have all the modern appliances in the house, even solar heating. At the same time, we have bought a big plot of land and there we are building the family business. So the second floor is going to be a carpentry workshop that will be run by two of my sons, both of them working in carpentry in Greece. The third floor will be a shop to sell construction materials, very good quality. My son who works in construction has made a deal with his boss to give him materials to sell here. While the first floor will be a cafeteria and a restaurant, more a fast-food shop, and this will be run by my other son who has worked for many years, along with his wife, in a fast-food shop in Greece. He has already brought the technology and a top-of-the-line food processor. That will be the first business to start because it is almost ready. My sons have spent many years away, now this is the moment when every sacrifice will pay off.

But emigration does not bring only money: it brings new ways of living, different cultures, modernization, development. Those who have family members abroad have better clothes, have bigger bellies and their cheeks are ruddy with health. They also bring new things, new ideas and more modern lifestyles. It's important for the people here. (Elsa, 43)

Especially for younger relatives of emigrants, having an older brother or sister abroad makes it possible to have more 'undeclared' pocket money, to have fashionable clothes, and 'cool' stories to share with peers. The decision-making in families is often influenced by the older brother or sister living abroad: young girls are allowed to continue their education because it was suggested by the family member abroad, seeing an older brother succeed is seen by youth as an open door to the future, for their own emigration.

Education is very important for all emigrants. Perhaps they see how important education is in the countries they are in and it becomes important for them also. I don't know the reason but I know that many, many parents who live abroad are very interested and bring money for their children to go to school and continue their education. And it does not matter if the child is a girl or a boy. But not only the children, also the little brothers or sisters. I saw many cases where they had decided to take the daughter out school and the mother brought her back saying that her son abroad had said to do so. Emigration has become very important and in my opinion this is one of the most positive outcomes. Many times I get phone calls from the parents [especially fathers] abroad asking me how his son/daughter is doing at school, if there is a need for money to buy more books etc. (Sanie, 34)

My son in Italy finances my daughter's university education. First he decided that she would continue at a private university and not a public one. He sent money every month to pay for it. I could never afford that, but he wanted it that way and that's the way it is. In the beginning I didn't want to because I did not have money for it and when I said this to



him he said that was not my business but his. So he and his wife took care of it. He suggests the best courses for her, he also suggested the faculty, he wanted her to study business administration because he says she can find a job and make money. (Ali, 54)

Migrant women spoke of the benefits they had if their husbands, brothers or fathers were emigrants. According to them, men change abroad, and when they return they bring with them new ideas and values, which in turn are converted into new and modern manners and behaviour.

The men change when they go abroad. They live there in another environment, see different things, behaviour, interact with people, see how the men there treat their wives and they learn. When men return they are different. They start to pay attention to different things, such as the children's schooling, helping with the household chores, and taking their wives out more often. I have the example of my brother. When he was living here he was very conservative and old-fashioned. His wife and daughter could not go out even to the doorstep. Now he is in England. He has changed so much that I can't recognize him. I even [laughs] say to my husband 'why don't you go to England for a while?' My husband laughs and says to me that he can't go or he would become too soft and I would jump on his neck [an Albanian saying]. My brother has sent his daughter to school; she did not dare to go out the backyard before. His wife has taken the scarf from her head, she wears modern clothes now, goes out with friends. He takes her to have a coffee, to the hairdresser. He is a different man. In England he was working for a good family, very modern. Also his friends there were from the city and modern. There he was surrounded by these examples that have changed him. (Ana, 27)

*b) 'They are not here but at the same time they are' – Transnational families and care*

Being away and separated for a long time it is a difficult challenge for many families. However, the benefit and care that the families gain from emigration is vital for many households and people continue to choose emigration. From a distance, emigrants still look after their parents and family members. They do so through different channels, such as financial remittances, phone calls, presents, and visits. Internal migrants, who were care-receivers, spoke as follows about these benefits and what it meant to receive them.

My son has lived in Italy for many years but he is very connected with us, he takes care of us. He advises us what to do and how to invest the money [...] that he sends us [laughs]. Even though my son is not physically with us, he is a very active part of our existence here. I think this is the case for many other families. When they come here [the son and daughter in law] they take us to the doctor to for a check up or if we have any health related complaints. They take us out to the restaurant, to the beach, to have coffee. When

they come here is like a big feast for us all. They are not here but at the same time they are... if you see what I mean. (Mira, 49)

In many instances the transnational care is reciprocated and family members remaining at home become care givers (see also Vullnetari, 2009).

My sister in Greece helps us a lot. Every time she comes she brings money, clothes or things for the house. She has a little daughter and when she comes she leaves her for few months so my mother takes care of her. But she [the sister] does not leave only her daughter but also a lot of money to keep her: she leaves money not for one child but for five [laughs]. (Astrit, 24)

### ***Negative aspects of emigration – ‘Away from the eyes away from the heart’***

Apart from its benefits for a household, emigration can also sometimes be a heavy psychological burden for families, especially mothers, wives and children (see also McKenzie and Menjívar, 2011). Moreover, following mainly illegal routes, it is often a difficult and dangerous process to undertake. However difficult, in the Albanian context<sup>51</sup> it is an indispensable coping strategy. Emigration can mean children growing up without their father: a wife is left alone without a husband or living in an extended family with her in-laws. It not only creates physical distance but also emotional distance between children and parents and husband and wife. Despite that burden on those left behind, it is still considered better to have economic security, a better house and a business.

We have a saying, away from the eyes away from the heart. We live with fear. To have children and to live without the father of your children is tough. It is tough but I can do nothing. Now I am used to it. We both know [she and her husband] that if he was here with us we would be poor. What can we do, we have to choose [...] there is no other way. (Mimoza, 26)

You have to go no matter what is left behind... You have to go for the survival of the one you leave behind... I haven't seen my son for six years: he can't come because he doesn't have documents. I haven't seen my daughter for eight years, I haven't seen my grandchild ever and he is five years old now. Emigration is an open wound in our hearts. (Naxhie, 52)

The emigration of Albanians is very difficult. They cross mountains in the cold... They walk for days and days and some of them die on the way... and in the end they may get caught by the police... Be beaten by them to death and than sent back... to retry again and again...

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<sup>51</sup> Emigration from Albania has been and still is mainly illegal. Much movement has been clandestine, via mountain paths, or across the sea (King, 2003).

They go and nobody knows their fate, how they will end up. The mothers just wait to hear the bad news... It is so painful... I know because I have children abroad. (Vera, 46)

People choose emigration, and even though being separated for a long time is a difficult challenge for many families, the benefit and care that they gain from emigration is still vital for many households.

## **9.6 Discussion and Conclusions**

This paper explored the linkages between internal and international in Albania, at the community and individual level from the internal migrant's perspective. Apart from some key studies in the Albanian migration literature (King, 2003; 2004; King et al. 2006; 2008; Vullnetari, 2009), there have been few contributions which have researched the complexity of intertwining internal and international migration. This paper has reported on some of the interactions involved in the migration processes in Albania, where one migration type cannot be understood without acknowledging the other.

The effects of international migration on internal migration are many and for the most part, positive. First and foremost, emigration generates financial remittances which act as a poverty reducer for the many families who remain behind. This paper confirms what has been reported by other studies conducted in the Albanian context, namely that financial remittances have been crucial in enabling the economic survival of families and lifting them out of poverty (De Soto et al. 2002; King, 2005). However, in contrast with other literature, this research found that financial remittances have not only been a survival aid but also a developmental one, contributing to the improvement of living conditions of the migrants' families (De Soto et al. 2002; King, 2005; King and Vullnetari, 2003; Gëdeshi et al. 2003). Through these financial remittances, emigrants influence the rest of their family's decision to migrate internally, towards more prosperous areas. Emigration enables internal migrants to develop a lifestyle, feel secure, make their own decisions and take control over their lives.

Secondly, and very worth noting, are the social remittances which are transferred through various channels of transnational communication. The social remittances of the diffusion of ideas, behaviours and skills from the country of destination to the original country have brought about important changes in the sociocultural landscape (Vullnetari, 2009). Social remittances can influence the power relationships between gender and generation within the household and community. Emigrants return home with new learned behaviour, professional skills and values. According to Fuga (2004), the remittances (both financial and social) tend to concentrate in one point in the country of origin, in this case Tirana. There is less diffusion of social and financial remittances in the rural areas where the emigrants originated. The social and economic discrepancy between rural and urban is thus widening further (Vullnetari, 2009).

Emigration affects and shapes the gender and generation structures of internal migrants through social remittances. It is important to point out the combined effects that

internal and international migration can have on the emancipation of women and the modernization of youth once they have moved from the village to the city. According to Çaro et al. (2010), the city gives rural women a sense of independence and empowerment, while for the young migrants Tirana was seen as the place where they could access opportunities for personal development, beyond the conservative rural environment. These modernization premises are reinforced further by the international migration of family members. The money, experiences, new behaviour and experiences emigrants diffuse from the destination countries back to the country of origin increase the independence and empowerment of women and younger people and also of the emigrants themselves, thus challenging the traditional gender and generational roles of income provision in the family (Çaro et al.2010; Vullnetari, 2009).

This research highlighted both the positive and the negative effects of emigration. One of the main concerns among those left behind, especially wives, mothers and children, was the psychological and emotional burden of being far from their loved ones. Adaptation strategies are employed in such cases, including transmission of transnational care at a distance. In addition, the dependence that internal migrants have on financial remittances can disturb their adjustment to their host society.

Finally, this research found that financial and social remittances were key ingredients within the Albanian livelihood strategy, and a security system for internal migrants. In the absence of a formal programme or strategy to improve living conditions, Albanian internal migrants regard emigration as their own personal 'government'. Through a process of international and internal migration they have secured social and economic development, education for their children and a brighter future.

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