

## Book Review

King, Russell, Nicola Mai, and Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers (eds). 2005. *The New Albanian Migration*. Brighton, Portland, UK: Sussex Academic Press.

Although the new Albanian migration is a demographic, economic and political phenomenon that affects, besides Albania, at least two other countries, Greece and Italy, both EU members, we were lacking a book that would assess the trends of this migration and bring empirical evidence on its effects on both Albania and its migrating citizens' countries of destination. *The New Albanian Migration* comes with the hope of filling this gap. From the practical point of view, it helps decision makers in designing policies that would, on the one hand, positively canalize energies and resources generated by immigration, and on the other, mitigate social traumas that a demographic outflow produces. Apparently, the editors are aware of this dichotomy, as displayed by the methodological scrupulosity of some articles, and the orientation toward policy recommendation of some others. Yet some other articles shift to policy recommendation after having developed empirical analyses.

The book is a collection of loose chapters ranging from sociology to anthropology to political science, without any overarching theoretical approach for coaxing them, and without any introductory chapter that would ease the reader's comprehension of the academic focus of the book. This initial and substantial gap makes not only its reading difficult, but also its reviewing, especially, the process of focusing on arguments based on a unified general theoretical orientation. Yet this fragmentary nature has the merit of covering a multiple array of problems by historically and geographically shifting the focus to several regions and periods. Thus, ironically, the weaknesses of the book stem from its strengths and *vice versa*.

In the absence of a theorizing introduction, in the first chapter, Barjaba and King contribute by assessing figures referring to the Albanian migration in Greece and Italy, and also by assessing the existing theoretical framework and how the Albanian migration fits into it. The authors argue that the new Albanian emigration is neither just an answer to the emergent hardship that the country is

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experiencing, nor a demographic steaming off after half a century of isolation. According to them, this emigration is the modern version of a continuous outflow that dates back to the medieval era and represents an answer to the country's scarce resources and poverty. The rest of the article is a collection of Albanian migration figures coming from different sources, and being estimated by different, and often incompatible, methodologies. Therefore, assessing features of Albanian migration by using these figures leads to incorrect results, and they might better be used in an anecdotal manner rather than as estimates or proxies.

Some of the articles demonstrate a methodological meticulousness and the authors' good knowledge on the subject. Thus, the chapters written by Kapllani and Mai, and Konidaris, although bearing the difficulty of testing their arguments with (allegedly interpretable) historical facts, manage not only to bring evidence in favor of their arguments, but also to demonstrate how an empirical research basing on historical facts can be properly conducted. Kapllani and Mai argue that the reason for the deprecation and rejection that the Greek society demonstrate toward everything that is Albanian stems from similarities and not from differences between the two cultures, especially from the Albanian similarities to what Greeks strive to reject from their collective memory. According to the authors, "Albanians were identified with aspects of Greekness which have been selectively disavowed and rejected in the historical process of formation of the Greek national culture." This contempt and the vulnerability that it creates for Albanian immigrants has been, according to Konidaris, employed by the Greek government for achieving political ends toward Albania.

Labrianidis and Hatziprokopiou masterly conduct research based on an overall correct methodology by probing into the least observed phenomenon, the voluntary return of Albanian immigrants after several years of emigration and their chances to settle and prosper in their home country. The study develops a comparative analysis of returning chances and the returnees' performance in spite of their country of emigration, based on a fair sample built out of 324 interviews with Albanian former emigrants in Greece and Italy, developed during March and April 2002. By analyzing the economic and social structure of emigration countries, the authors find that Italy attracts "a higher proportion of educated and skilled Albanian workers, mostly of urban origin." In addition, since emigrating to Italy is more difficult, hence more expensive than Greece, Albanians who migrate to Italy come from higher social and economic strata than those who migrate to Greece. Yet the factors that make the migration to Greece easier and cheaper also increase the chances for lower emigrants' permanent returning rates – and higher short term returns – from that country than from Italy. As has been earlier concluded by some other authors theorizing migration factors, geographic proximity "has shaped the patterns of emigration from Albania," and, as the authors conclude, "will equally determine the waves of return migration in the coming period."

Flavia Piperno analyzes the Albanian emigration from a development perspective. The author argues in favor of, and later recommends, “the stimulation of savings by emigrants; the channeling of remittances through formal structures and their deposits in the countries of origin; [and] the facilitation of productive investment by emigrants in the countries of origin.” She argues that both the migrant destination countries and their countries of origin would benefit from this double-level policy; the destination countries would re-orient money from informal to formal channels, and the migrant countries of origin would increase the financial volume of special savings and credit institutions. Indeed, Piperno’s research rests in between an analytical and an empirical study; while she does not make any systematic empirical research in favor of her arguments, she reaches her conclusions by analytically considering facts and data. She does not aim to reach any academic conclusion, but only bolsters with facts her policy recommendations.

The last two chapters written respectively by Gilles de Rappter and Georgia Kretsi analyze the anthropological effects of emigration and how it is reshaping Albanian southerners toward their regional, ethnic, and religion pertinence, their relationships with other ethnographic groups, and Greece. They reveal identity dilemmas arose out of the necessity to emigrate, and the inherent clash between an already forged Albanian identity, and lucrative appeals from identity-constituting elements shared with the neighboring Greece, their main emigration destination. Both authors conclude that a new, transnational identity is on its way to being created in some of the Albanian southern regions. In Lunxheria, according to de Rappter, “it seems that Albanian national identity is only a part of the new Lunxhot ethnic identity,” while, according to Kretsi, elder people in the southern Albanian village of Mursi, “tried to exhaust the transnational potential of Epirus (the borderland territory shared by Albania and Greece) ..., and to perform a compatible way out of the ‘national dilemma’ they have been subjected to via migration and identity politics in the post-socialist area.”

Generally speaking, the book represents a serious effort of its editors and contributors in assessing, and, to a certain extent, theorizing the Albanian migration, and also elucidating some of its spillovers. However, most of the empirical research included in this book is built on sampling interviewees and bears the risk of bias, which is typical for immigrant sampling: the lack of randomness. To build a sample from a certain social layer means that that social layer must first be theoretically defined, and second, its sampled units must be contacted. Sampling immigrants means that one first has to define who is an immigrant, and then physically contact those people. Usually, in order to find them, researchers employ – as Kelly and Orgocka admit – acquaintances most commonly coming from researchers’ academic environments who are usually students, colleague professors and researchers, or employing neighbor immigrants

living in the same mid-class urban areas with them. Orgocka's methodological bias leads her to successful women, making her research resemble a gender manifesto based on successful stories – or stories that are introduced as successful, even without being so – than academic research based on falsifiable arguments.

Finally, it can be easily conceived that, as a path breaker, despite its weaknesses, the book brings the major promise of a new study area: the Albanian migration and its spillovers. It enhances the infant academic research on the topic and summarizes the state of research in that field. From this perspective, it might serve as a compass for other scholars that would endeavor to describe and find explanations about the Albanian migration.

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