Chapter 4
Transnational Ties and Attitudes Towards Return

One of the main developments in the migration literature of the past few decades is recognition of and research on migrants' double belongingness and their ties with the receiving and the home countries. Transnationalism has irrevocably changed the way we see migration's effects on migrants' and their descendants' cultural worlds, their cognitive geographies and their pathways of integration and patterns of mobility. This chapter aims to further the understanding of transnational ties by offering a cross-generational view of the way Albanian migrants and their descendants experience these across different contexts, domains and levels. The section on the first generation looks at return visits, ties through the media and technology and remittances. It also includes a section on attitudes towards return. These attitudes are framed and evaluated transnationally, based on feelings of belongingness and a more-or-less rational appreciation of opportunities in both the home and the host country. The section on the second generation follows a similar though not identical structure. As it becomes apparent in the data, the themes treated have their own particularities for the second generation, as well as reflecting the role of the parents. The findings show that the first and the second generation establish and maintain different kinds of transnational ties. These ties change over time, though the effect of time on transnational ties is different, with some ties strengthening and others weakening over time and being replaced by different ones. Furthermore, transnational ties appear here to be contingent on institutional aspects and they have an impact on migrant integration and mobility, although these impacts are mutual and differ between the three main sites of this study. Overall, the data call for a look beyond the nation-state, both symbolically and spatially, as a presumed 'unit' of reference for transnational ties.

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4.1 Theorizing Transnational Ties Beyond the Nation-State

The terms 'transnationalism' and 'transnational community' became formal in academia in the 1990s, as migration scholars started to insist that, rather than being two separate domains, the homeland and the home country were interconnected transnationally in terms of the economic, social, political and cultural affairs that migrants were involved in. These 'affairs' were found to be sustained, regularly or on a more situational basis, involving both migrants and their descendants and operating at different levels (Morawska 2003).

Debates on transnationalism are placed within a broader discourse on the nation-state and its role as a regulator and determinant of social and political life dynamics. Levitt and Jaworsky (2007, p. 133) conclude that the literature on transnationalism acknowledges the role of the state in shaping transnational practices, by enabling or constraining migrants' political claims, but these authors conceive the relationship between the state and migrants as multiple and not disappearing or one-sided. Others maintain that, rather than being weakened by immigrants' transnationalism, the receiving state remains a major actor in influencing the intensity, forms and directions of transnationalism (Joppke and Morawska 2003). The emergence of the term 'transnationalism' came about in part as a response to 'methodological nationalism' and a certain bounded view of society and culture associated with it (Glick Schiller 2004; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002).

Glick Schiller et al. (1995, p. 50) maintain that the conduct of transnational lives is related to three main contextual factors: the history of immigration and modes in which immigrants are received in the host country; migrants' cultural resources; and discrimination and hostility faced by an immigrant group. Generally speaking, large-scale and politically motivated migrations give rise to transnationally oriented migrant communities. The cultural resources of a migrant group have been found to shape transnational practices, such as the type of ethnic niches that migrants occupy and political activities that connect with home countries. Finally, a high degree of discrimination in the receiving country is associated with 'reactive transnationalism' or a tendency towards engagement in activities that reaffirm migrants' collective identity and open up opportunities for niche-based economic prosperity (Faist 2000a).

More recently, Dahinden (2009, p. 11), while reaffirming that there is a relationship between mobility and transnationalism, adds a time element to these findings, although she cautions us to distinguish between different forms of transnationalism.[1] She finds that the longer the migrants stay in the receiving country, the less transnational they are, and the strength and the proportion of transnational ties diminishes as the duration of stay increases—an argument that supports assimilation theory. At an individual level, the degree and kind of transnational engagement are

[1] As for the time element, Guarnizo et al. (2003) found that political transnationalism increases with time in migration.

conditioned by factors such as gender, social class, migration channel, legal status, economic means and migration and settlement history. These factors interact with others related to community structure, gendered patterns of contact and political circumstances in the homeland (Pessar and Mahler 2003; Vertovec 2009).

Academically, the field of transnational studies is fragmented and coherent theoretical frames to define transnationality are missing (Yeoh et al. 2003). In an attempt to ascertain the authority of the term, Vertovec (2001, 2009, pp. 4–13) maintains that both theory and research on transnationalism have been grounded upon rather distinct conceptual premises. He emphasizes six of them, which overlap and are interdependent: social morphology, types of consciousness, modes of cultural reproduction, avenues of capital, sites of political engagement, and (re)construction of place and locality. A clearer and more relevant classification is that of Faist (2000b, pp. 202–210), who refers to the density of ties and linkages and offers a classification based on three groups. Firstly, transnational kinship groups are characterized by reciprocity and are especially common among first-generation labour migrants and refugees. Second are the transnational circuits based on principle of instrumental reciprocity, consisting of a constant circulation of goods, people and information across the sending and receiving countries. Finally, transnational communities go beyond kinship systems and consist of strong and dense social and symbolic ties over time and across space.

However, much less is spoken about transnational identities, and culture seems to be 'lost in the move from the old to the new country' (Levitt 2005, p. 51). This is slightly surprising, since Vertovec (2001) points out that transnationalism encompasses modes of cultural reproduction, associated with a fluidity of constructed styles, social institutions and everyday practices. Levitt (2005, p. 51) maintains that research on race, ethnicity and immigration has mainly focused on the transition from the old culture to the new and argues for 'bringing culture back in'. She describes social life and institutions under the influence of transnationalism as undergoing fundamental changes while giving rise to new cultural practices and institutions, which furthermore feed back to existing cultural conventions.

On transnationalism and culture, Glick Schiller (2004, p. 450) argues that the development of the transnational paradigm has helped academics to reconceptualize the terms, moving away from existing definitions that are based on the idea of culture as discrete, stable and historically specific. Transnationalism scholarship deploys a broader and boundless concept of culture, which is based on elements such as social relations, social structure and a set of inter-generationally transmitted patterns of action, belief and language. These arguments, however, seem not to fully address the need to move away from a bounded notion of culture. Reviewing the literature on diaspora and transnationalism, Nagel (2002, p. 250) proposes a reconceptualization of culture as a 'constant production and reproduction of social meanings through relationships of power, located not only in the nation-state but also in households, neighborhoods, workplaces'. Olwig (2003) likewise maintains that the notion of cross-border arenas of transnational processes defined against the notion of nation-state bring the danger of narrowing down the field of investigation. Rather, a broader approach is needed that focuses on socio-cultural systems

in relation to migrants' life trajectories and fields of interpersonal ties, while also considering the national and transnational structures that condition the migratory movements.

The concept of transnational social spaces has been an important development in the study of transnationalism (Vertovec 2001). Different authors opt for the suffixes field or space. Pries (2001, p. 21) emphasizes the stability and pluri-locality of social spaces and defines them as 'configurations of social practices, artifacts and systems of symbols that are characterized and defined by their density and importance in time and geographical space'. Faist (2000a) furthermore observes that transnational social spaces develop in two phases: in the beginning they are the outcome of international migration of mainly the first generation, while in a second phase they are passed on to migrants' descendants and seem to develop a life of their own. During their migration history, which often involves recurrent migration and transnational movements, international migrants are involved in transnational exchanges and build multiple ties of familial, economic, social, religious, cultural and political nature on the basis of which there are various forms of resources and capital.

On the other hand, the concept of transnational social fields uncovers another essential element in the way transnational processes are conceptualized: that of the level of interaction and subjectivity. Levitt (2005), recognizing the simultaneity of migrants' activities, calls for a move away from the neat division of migrants' connections into local, national, transnational and global. Simultaneity also applies to these different levels of interaction, as social fields are not only multi-layered crossings of nation-states, but while making and unmaking relationships and ties within these fields, migrants are influenced by laws, social institutions and conventions that operate locally, nationally, internationally and globally. On examining the simultaneity of migrants' incorporations in both sending and receiving countries, however, we should consider that homeland and host country socio-economic and status ladders do not always operate on the same principles and criteria. Consequently, migrants often face different opportunity structures in homeland and host societies, and may move up or down the ladder in respect to one of the two, or experience downward or upward mobility in both of them (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007, p. 139). Many well-educated Albanian migrants experience de-skilling and devaluation of their human capital because they are only able to access low-status jobs in destination countries.

In developing the concept of transnational social fields, Glick Schiller (2004) adds a more subjective element, distinguishing transnational ways of being from transnational ways of belonging. Transnational ways of being consist of instances of behaviour through which people conduct or are related to transnational activities. On the other hand, transnational ways of belonging tell us about cultural representation, ideology and identity related to these activities. These are processes of an emotional nature, through which people connect to different locations bound together by a common destiny and history, through memory, nostalgia and imagination. Pessar and Mahler (2003, p. 815) implicitly suggest that both ways of being and ways of belonging are affected by people's social locations within 'gendered geographies of

power'. The differentiation is firstly expressed through different access to migration; and gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, class, sexuality and so on condition ways of thinking about migration. Although under-researched, issues of power are thought to have considerable relevance for the current dynamics of transnational processes and are expected to persist in creating uneven trends in these processes (Glick Schiller 2004; Vertovec 2009).

This current study employs the distinction between transnational ways of being and ways of belonging as the basis of its data interpretation since these concepts are considered less vague than the notions of transnational social spaces and fields, and therefore, more suitable for empirical research (see also Snel et al. 2006, p. 288). The concept of diaspora is also de-emphasized since there is little by way of a strong Albanian community in any of the three cities; nor is there a symbolic identification, belongingness to a common homeland and shared past or a common current or future destiny among Albanian migrants and their descendants (Clifford 1994).

Cognition, on the one hand, and the 'classics' such as gender, class and race/ethnicity, have re-established themselves by finding recognition as a bunch of factors shaping transnational processes. However, a more spatial approach can also be noted here. Pries (2001, p. 28) calls for a rethinking of the relationship between the social and the spatial, claiming that the spatial should be recognized as an independent force affecting the social. Peraldi's (2005) approach is enlightening in presenting a particular account of migration and mobility. The case of suitcase traders and their trading routes, which connect the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean, demonstrates that the nation-state cannot contain cultural dynamics, social interactions and professional careers and positionality in various networks. These traders' sociability is not organized in relation to territories but to several localities, while their universe is made up of scattered urban and metropolitan spaces. Such mobilities appear to be 'marked with the triple seal of emancipation, deterritorialisation and transnationalism' and give rise to sequential and irregular geographies of migrant diasporas under the effect of globalization (Peraldi 2005, p. 60, 2007).

Therefore, the current study will analyse both integration and identity and transnationalism considering their relations to space and to place. Transnational ties are usually seen as established across two nation-states: the sending and the receiving country, although the developers of the concept were inspired by a critique of methodological nationalism, so the common practice of taking the nation-state as the unit of analysis when immigrants' integration was under scrutiny (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). Increasingly, however, scholars point to a less dichotomous picture than one that portrays transnational linkages as between a single homeland and a diaspora. In fact, research shows that such linkages span numerous localities and places (Duvall 2003, p. 301). Importantly, migrants' ties are not only established across nation-states but also influenced by laws, social institutions and conventions, which operate at several scales: the local, national and global. These are not neatly divided, but rather integrated in the making and experiencing of transnational ties (Levitt 2005; Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004). This integration of multiple scales defies a hierarchical understanding of the local, national and global, contributing to a better grasp of the multiple loyalties, attachments and identifications of citizens

(Isin 2007). As a result, the integration of these levels and the acknowledgement of the interactions and multiplicity of processes that take place simultaneously at these various levels has given rise to concepts such as 'glocalization' (Roudometof 2005).

But spatial dimensions have not been widely incorporated in the studies of transnationalism, especially those on the second generation, although Vertovec (2009, pp. 4–13) mentions the construction of place and locality as one of the distinct conceptual premises of theory and research on transnationalism. The lack of research on spatial dimensions is surprising, as space is a well-established concept in migration literature. King (1995, p. 27) maintains that 'migration stretches particular forms of social relations across space: both the social relations of capitalist production and the personal social networks that reproduce migration chains through time. The meaning of place for a migrant torn from his or her roots is indelible.' Kivisto (2001) picks up on this 'gap' in his review of the literature on transnationalism. He strongly supports the view that place counts in transnational ties and spaces, since the vast majority of immigrants are located in one particular place, rather than simultaneously in two worlds. Thus, there is a need to rethink the relationship between the social and the spatial.

The findings of research for this book offer a cross-generational analysis of space, place and locality in the context of European migration. Locality, space and place, especially related to the urban context, consist of relatively new strands in the study of migration and integration (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2009). Within this body of work translocal ties have been defined as ties connecting places or localized life-worlds whose distinctiveness is retained despite global migration flows (Brickell and Datta 2011; Conradson and McKay 2007; Ma 2002). Translocalism consists of 'situations where immigrants do not maintain multiple, intense, routinized bonds and networks with the homeland, family, friends, and communities. Instead, those efforts most often are likely to be moderate and periodic, somewhat casual and uneven and not routine' (Barkan 2004, p. 340). Therefore, in order to understand translocality we need to focus on subjectivity-place relations, which are shaped by global flows and inherent dynamics of power and agency, creating new forms of locality (McKay 2006). Translocality usefully allows for the study of the local, which is often overlooked in research on migration, transnationalism and globalization (Brickell and Datta 2011).

In turn, return migration has mainly been studied by focusing on those migrants who eventually returned; attitudes towards return have been little studied (see Elizur 1973). Even when attitudes have been included in analyses, they are approached mainly in terms of the economic impact of intentions to return on contributions to the homeland:

> From this perspective, the relevant policy goal should be to encourage the family, social and economic ties that keep alive the prospect or possibility of one day returning home, even if this does not eventuate. Indeed, it could even be argued that the most desirable economic scenario is one in which all migrants keep alive the intent of returning without ever doing so (Ahlburg and Brown 1998, p. 148)

Inclusion of attitudes in analyses of return migration has gone hand in hand with their clear definition and a greater understanding of their role in the process of

return migration, which takes on new and more complex dimensions when analysed through the transnationalism paradigm. Dustmann et al. (1996, p. 233) maintain that return intentions are valid information for understanding migrants' behaviour irrespective of the outcome, that is, whether return actually takes place. More recent is the situating of these attitudinal variables as part of the return process, involving the transnational experience of the children of migrants. This is surprising because some recent research shows the importance of children in building and maintaining transnational ties. As will be shown later in this chapter, children have strong attitudes towards return and are one of the main factors affecting the family's return project.

4.2 The First Generation

4.2.1 Return Visits

Although the transnational ties of the first generation take various forms, return visits have a special importance. This is because they concern visits to family and kin, which are a strong obligation in Albania. Return visits hold this importance even though they occur less frequently than contacts through media and technology, which take place, in many cases, on a daily basis. According to Duvall (2004, p. 53), transnational studies assume the existence of connections between homeland and the receiving country, but the physical movement of migrants has been overlooked compared to other 'transnational exercises'. Kibria (2002, p. 297) adds the voluntary element of such visits, defining them as short-term returns to the homeland for purposes of tourism, leisure, seeing family and learning about the culture. Duvall (2003), however, sees these visits as taking place within the wider diaspora; hence, they have a broader role in linking numerous social fields and maintaining transnational identity structures.

For most of the first-generation Albanian migrants and some of the second generation, these visits were impossible in the early years of settlement and childhood, respectively. This was due to the history of immigration of this group and certain objective factors including the delayed regularization process, the phenomenon of chain migration and therefore the presence of relatives in the receiving country (less so in the case of the UK), the existence of 'family hubs' in other countries, the stage of incorporation of this immigrant group and the way it was perceived in the receiving country. As Duvall (2003) observes, borders and state policies have crucial importance. Due to the 'illegal' nature of much Albanian migration, return visits were not possible for a number of years. However, transnational ties are also shaped through memory and nostalgia. This type of tie is far more common among the parents' generation.

> Lela (female, 37, Florence): When I go out for a walk, sometimes I feel so lost in my thoughts and I don't know anymore where I am; I feel like I am taking a walk in Durrës.

> There are these moments when I have nostalgia and I feel like I am walking around in my country. I listen to people speaking in Italian and I feel like they speak Albanian. When I go to Albania, in a week I see so many things, so many changes and I miss so much the past, the childhood I spent there, my friends, everything. So I don't find myself neither there, nor here.

Return visits have changed in terms of their meaning and frequency over the years. Once the issue of 'papers' was resolved, most of the first generation immediately undertook return visits, and continue to do so. A smaller number have ceased visiting, or visit only very occasionally. The narratives illustrate the high emotion felt on the first return visit to Albania, on getting to know the place and reuniting with relatives after a long gap. The preparation for such return trips is generally described as a time of joyful anticipation for all concerned. The visits' emotional character, imbued with longing and belonging, is a general feature, though usually associated with other reasons revealing an instrumental rationale of these visits (see Box 4.1).

Attitudes and expectations of the extended family in Albania have a strong impact on the continuation and frequency of return visits. This role of the extended family has only recently been acknowledged in the transnational communities literature. The role of kinship networks has mainly been studied in relation to chain migration and the initial settlement of migrants (Choldin 1973); the focus on kinship in terms of return visits is recent (Mason 2004). Writing of the Caribbean context, Conway and Potter (2009, p. 234) note that intra-generational family connections expressed in family love, obligations and responsibilities are among the strongest reasons for transnational mobility, mainly in terms of return. This view, however, contrasts with Albanian migrants' attitudes towards the collective culture. Their narratives indicate a shift towards individuality on the one hand, but they also reflect changes observed in Albania during return visits, such as the loosening of ties between relatives and a changing appreciation of kin, along with diminishing appreciation of community values and a move towards 'appearances' and materialism. This is also noted in other authors' writings on Albania. Misha (2008, p. 125) maintains that the transition in Albania was accompanied by a crisis of the value framework that underpinned the country's social organization before the collapse of communism; this in turn caused social fragmentation in Albanian society.

> Abaz (male, 44, Thessaloniki): Visits to Albania have become less frequent. This last time I went I was returning after six years. I went for New Year, because New Year's is our traditional celebration, as you may know. I went there two years ago, but it wasn't the same atmosphere as before… Everyone was just staying home, minding their own problems. The visits to the relatives, I am not saying they were not taking place anymore, but from 100 per cent, I could say they were reduced by 75 per cent! There weren't visits anymore, back and forth to relatives' houses. I felt like love and respect for kin and relatives were diminished in comparison with the old times when we were there.

Some of these changes in perception are part of an evolution in adulthood of the importance of the extended family; or difficulties with in-laws' interference in the relational sphere. Relationships between men and women often change markedly during migration, involving more empowerment of the women and more importance given to the nuclear family and independence from in-laws and relatives. There is

also opposition from parents and the second generation towards interference by the extended family in the choices that parents make for children, especially girls.

> Anila (female, 35, Florence): Last time we went, me and my husband, his parents interfered. He is very stressed because he works long hours and I understand him, but they don't get it that this human being is really tired and is working very hard. I don't see him myself all day; I see him only in the evening. And I also need to stay with him… We are spending all our lives like this! All year I see my husband once a week on Sunday, I also need to spend time with him, but they were with us morning till evening in our house. They made my life hell! I had to sacrifice myself for his mum and dad.

A trend that cuts across the data is that of return visits providing an occasion to meet for relatives who have migrated to different countries. By the same token, they offer a rare opportunity for members of the second generation to meet, for instance, cousins. They thus constitute an important setting for the creation and restoration of multiple transnational kinship ties.

Box 4.1 Thessaloniki-Tirana Return: A Bus Ethnography

I am on the bus travelling from Thessaloniki to Tirana, 'replicating' the trips I used to take as a student 5 years ago. Since my time in Greece, migrants' movements are much more frequent. There are more travel agencies, which also keeps the price low. A return trip by bus costs € 56. A travel agent in Tirana told me that the trip by plane would cost € 140, and 230 for a one-way flight during Easter. The high cost of air travel is a major reason why most transnational movements between Greece and Albania happen by bus. The new 'Egnatia' road has made a big difference in the speed of travelling.

The bus is full of people. The Easter holiday is just starting, so families, students and young men are headed to Albania. Young people studying in Greece are returning home for the Easter holidays. A granny is visiting relatives to mourn a deceased family member. There are middle-aged men—migrant heads of families with family back in Albania too. There are single men and mothers with children going for holidays. Usually the front seats are reserved for young ladies (students) and other women travelling alone, the elderly and people in bad health. The driver does not need to be told; whenever he sees a young lady unaccompanied, he reserves the front seat for her.

In the bus, the students' talk about their life in Greece and exchange stories with labour migrants. 'I was doing very well when I was in high school, but married quite early and couldn't continue', a mother says to the student next to her. Starting in Korçë, the bus stops in every village, or rather, anywhere close to the migrants' houses, or where relatives wait for them. Approaching Tirana, only the students remain. Earlier in the trip, their conversation was about feelings of subordination in relation to Greek peers, experiences with locals and opinions on international affairs. After we cross the border the main themes are the bad infrastructure in Albania and the incompetence

of border officer, while so many highly skilled and educated people abroad are unemployed. When entering Tirana, 'the highly skilled despair' for the country 'not being made yet' is displayed: the still unfinished road close to Tirana bearing the symbolism. The chatter fades away as we approach the centre of the capital.

> ZV: How has the frequency of the return visits changed over the years?
> Tony (male, 41, Florence): Until my parents passed away, I was going twice a year, and when they were ill, even four to five times a year. I went four times in 1999 when my dad passed away and the same when my mum passed away. I was there both for the funeral and the other rites. I went again in 2007 for the first anniversary and in 2008 I went again because my niece from Manchester was visiting. I hadn't seen her for eight years, so went on purpose to meet those cousins. Now they [the visits] will be yearly, because I have my brothers there, and then we can't really go often, because of work here, expenses… Whereas when my parents were there, we were more prone to go and we were sacrificing something, because it was a beautiful thing. I was arriving and at the door of the house were mum and dad waiting for me… Now we will go a little bit to one brother, a little bit to the other, and just once a year.

Close relations with the extended family and a high propensity to make return visits may reflect weak social integration in the country where these immigrants and their children live. But the opposite may also be true: visits may serve only to reveal the emotional distance, even alienation, they feel towards Albania. They notice the changes that have occurred in their own identities and in their homeland during their absence (see Duvall 2003, p. 299). This 'disembedding' from Albania was evident in the narratives.

> Anton (male, 38, Florence): The fact is that I feel a little bit alien when I walk on the street. Not in my house, the house remains the same, my parents are the same. But you go out in the street and see the changes in the town and you don't see anyone from those you left 16 years ago. You see a new generation with a new soul, you realize this and you feel a stranger in the place where you were born and grew up and spent your adolescence, more there than in the place where you live now… abroad.

There is also a feeling of opposition and subtle exclusion by general society in Albania towards immigrants, or a lack of consideration, growing over the years, that makes return visits a negative experience and discourages their continuation. Paralleling other research on return visits, this research found many articulations of 'othering' and even anger towards migrants during these visits (see Potter and Phillips 2006, p. 586). In the Albanian case, this may reflect the assimilation of the first generation, especially in the case of those in Florence.

> Michelino (male, 46, Florence): It's not that we don't love Albania. I love Albania. That's why I go there every year. Although they treat us very badly, starting with the politicians of Albania. They take advantage because they know we can't exist without going to Albania. They know we will go anyways…. But we are learning!… If you would go there and say these things, people start laughing at you. They would say, 'What's wrong with him? There he goes, the stupid one from Italy!' They take us for idiots when we go there. 'They have lost it completely, these people that come from Italy!'

The difficulties of travelling, including long hours of waiting at the border, are another negative aspect of return visits. Albanians living in Greece got stuck at the border for hours, even days, during holiday seasons. Those in Italy have negative recollections of Albanian ports. Some migrants articulate the issue of bad infrastructure as just another symptom of the disrespectful attitude of the Albanian state towards its emigrants and diaspora. Cost is a considerable barrier for those living in Britain and Italy, since they must rely on air transportation. These difficulties are mentioned as reasons for the discontinuation of return visits to the homeland and an orientation instead towards holidays in touristic areas of the countries where they live or in other countries or big cities (see also Duvall 2003, p. 302).

Transnational movements differ across the three countries and between genders. There are cases when only the father continues visiting, reflecting the poor social integration of Albanian men compared to women.

> ZV: Who takes the initiative for the visits?
> Sidorela (female, 22, Florence): My dad… because… my mum is practically completely adapted to the Italian world. She feels more Italian than Albanian. My dad, on the contrary, no. He feels more Albanian than Italian, so it's him… who always wants to go.

One factor that contributes to differences between sites is the situation with regard to regularization and residence papers. Difficulties with papers in Greece have obstructed transnational movements to Albania and other countries. From time to time, the Greek authorities have allowed Albanians to travel home only during holidays. Such constrictions impacts transnational care and transnational family ties.

> Entela (female, 42, Thessaloniki): We can travel only when they [the authorities] decide. They give us a document like that and we go. I have told to my parents 'You have to die at Christmas or Easter, because before or after we cannot come. We don't have papers!'

In contrast, acquisition of British citizenship marks the beginning of a dynamic period of transnational movements, which are also facilitated by the good airline connections from London. Though initially only back and forth to Albania, these movements soon began to include other European destinations as well.

> Miranda (female, 34, London): I will go to Bologna with my husband and my elder son because I found some very cheap tickets from London. How can you not travel with these prices! Fantastic! We have relatives there, so we see them and leave our son there then we go to Rome, me and my husband for a short holiday.

4.2.2 Transnational Ties Through Technology

Reference to the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) within the transnationalism and migration literature is recent, as one would expect due to the relatively new emergence of these technologies (e.g., Binaisa 2009). There is an obvious need to investigate the nature and implications of transnational ties established and maintained through ICTs, as well as their impact on migrants' strategies of integration (Christiansen 2004; Panagakos and Horst 2006). Transnational ties are expected to challenge existing concepts and theories of migration and to create a

need for theorizing on the links between technological advances and migration and immobility (Smith and King 2012).

The migrants in this study used ICT in various ways to keep in touch with Albania and relatives abroad, although the ICTs used has changed over time. Invariably, the ICTs used are dependent on the financial situation of the family, as technologies are not usually prioritized over other needs and the goal of saving. The telephone was the first means by which migrants kept in touch, independent of their legal status, though the frequency of calls to Albania depended on the financial means available and migrants' relationship with the extended family. Links via digital broadcasting and the Internet are a far more recent phenomenon, though their use depends on education and access to appropriate devices.

The use of mobile phones, too, differs between the skilled and unskilled migrants, or the more and less educated. The more educated migrants interviewed were typically involved in various forums and international mailing lists, via which they took part in discussions on important events and developments in Albania.[2] These online discussions gave rise to a form of political transnational involvement, sometimes resulting in declarations and petitions sent to the Albanian government or other international bodies. In some cases, the online forums linked users in Albania with those in the 'historical diaspora' in the USA and the Albanian immigrant communities in other countries.[3] One forum, for example, had surveys on whether the events in Albania on 21 January 2011 were tantamount to a *coup d' état*[4] and how the post-communist transition had impacted people's lives. Political transnationalism is otherwise lacking within the Albanian immigrant communities. Transnational ties of the highly skilled via the Internet are furthermore enabled by the websites of various Albanian newspapers published online.

Albanian families in all three countries have subscribed *en masse* to the private digital broadcasting platform DigitAlb.[5] This platform enables families to keep in touch with events in Albania, although first-generation migrants are its main consumers. There is also a difference in the types of information that the two generations consume from this platform. The first generation is interested in day-to-day news, while the second generation relates to it more casually, with teenagers watching mainly music shows and foreign movies and younger children watching cartoons. Watching media from the homeland is also a way for the first generation to express their 'positioning' in the host society and their need to be connected to the homeland.

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[2] See, e.g., the webpage of the network of Albanian academics abroad: www.alb-shkenca.org/ accessed 16 January. Also, there are various pages on Facebook, such as Albanian Women Network UK; UK Albanians Network; The Albanians in the UK; British Albanian Kosovar Council; Centre for Albanian Studies.

[3] See, e.g., The Albanian Forum (www.forumishqiptar.com or www.webalbania.com) accessed 16 January 2013.

[4] On 21 January 2011 there were massive public demonstrations in Tirana against corruption of the government that caused three deaths.

[5] DigitAlb was launched in July 2004 (www.digitalb.al accessed 16 January 2013).

> Fatmir (male, 41, London): I don't watch the English channels anymore since DigitAlb was issued. I don't watch them… It's five to six years now. Probably a bit in the morning when my wife checks out the news. But otherwise I watch DigitAlb… We are another 'dough', another generation; those who are twenty years old have no problem (to integrate), but us.

Although most parents subscribe to DigitAlb in order to be in touch with Albania, some use to so their children hear Albanian and retain the language. Therefore, the use of digital broadcasting is also related to the migrants' and their descendants' identification. In general, Albanian broadcasting is not present in households where families are moving towards assimilation, although transnational ties are maintained via the telephone and Internet.

The three countries differ in terms of the performance and maintenance of transnational ties through ICTs. Greece is less advanced in technological developments, so there transnational ties are maintained mainly through Albanian TV and telephone calls. In Florence, alongside the difference in the sample composition there (study participants were largely skilled migrants originating from urban areas in Albania), digital broadcasting was one of the main means of contact, but ties through the Internet were also common. In Britain, DigitAlb entered many Albanian households not only as a means of maintaining transnational ties but also out of necessity, since many among the first generation were not proficient in English. Resonating with other research on transnational ties (Snel et al. 2006), their exclusive watching of the Albanian media may well further decelerate the social integration of low-skilled Albanian migrants in Britain.

> ZV: Who wants to watch Albanian TV more?
> Drita (female, 45, London): The children like both, the Albanian and the English. But I get very nervous because I don't know what they are saying and I switch channels immediately. That's why I have bought the satellite and we watch our country's TV.

Furthermore, contact with Albania via TV has an important function in enabling comparison and evaluation of the living standards in both countries.

> Donika (female, 45, London): But especially when we watch on TV young people in Albania who speak three foreign languages, I tell him [my son]: 'Do you see this? No light or running water and look how much they study.' His cousin who has the same age is studying to become a dentist, and tells us she has to study using a candle!

4.2.3 Remittances

Remittances have long been studied within the framework of transnational ties. Classic writings consider them a key component of the tie between migrants and their families (Stark and Lucas 1988, p. 478). Initially remittances were considered as an economic factor at a macro level. Many studies therefore employed a quantitative methodology in their study. Qualitative studies or those following a mixed-method approach are rare and recent.

First-generation migrants maintain transnational ties to their 'home' communities in Albania in the form of social, financial and material remittances. However,

the degree to which each type of remittance is welcomed by the communities in the home country is different and the understanding of their meaning has changed over time. Different types of remittances are also related to each other.

Following Levitt (1998) and Levitt and Lamba-Nieves (2011), social remittances are flows from immigrants to the home country that have to do with ideas, behaviours, identities and social capital, which are remoulded by the migrants during their stay in the host country. One example pertinent to Albanian migrants is migrants' change in manners and behaviour in public spaces during the return visits, and their emphasis on sharing and sometimes even pressing their newly acquired norms and habits on their home-based kin.

> Lida (female, 46, Thessaloniki): People have changed a lot in Albania. There is a big difference in terms of manners; I noticed this last time I went to Albania. There are many changes, but still a lot of work is needed! Especially in terms of manners, behaviour, these things. Still a lot of work is needed, because all migrants have changed so much in terms of behaviour, that's why there are these clashes, as we saw this morning, with the bus's timetable. They should be accurate with the timetable!

A special case of social remittances relates to Albanian artists in the respective countries. Especially in Florence there is a concentration of artists who organize activities and exhibitions there, elsewhere in Italy and further afield in Europe. In some cases these consist of a particular form of two-way transnational engagement. While these artists keep their ties with Albania and with other cultural centres in Europe, they also organize promotional activities on Albania in the host country. For some artists, the social and material remittances originate from Albania. In other cases, previous transnational connections have led to more permanent settlement, reversing the flow of remittances.

> Pali (male, 48, Florence): The visits to Albania have become less frequent. Nowadays I have ties with Albania because of my creative activity… Basically I am like a migrating bird… since my creative activity started and was moulded there, although I try to make it universal. I have my philosophy, for example, in terms of happiness. Everyone has his own thing, so creativity should be without frontiers. From this point of view, my creative activity is modest. But I say to myself, if there exists a society, a country that needs free information, a small 'window', that is my country. Because I have my relatives there, my nephews, my 'cell' there and I see it how it functions. So, in a few words, it is my artistic activity that takes me to Albania. I go every year and organize a performance, a theatre or dance performance, an exhibition.

Social remittances also appear in the form of transnational initiatives inspired by a more entrepreneurial and proactive attitude cultivated during the stay in the host country. Different from the experience of immigrants in other European cities (see, e.g., Fauser 2007), however, these initiatives arke not related to activities of immigrant organizations or local-level politics. Moreover, social remittances of this kind are often obstructed by the disjuncture between migrants and those at home. The latter are generally not receptive towards migrants' ideas and projects.

> Michelino (male, 46, Florence): I went to the municipality of Peqin and told them, 'Could I bring two buses for free and you employ two of my relatives here?' The buses would then become the property of the municipality. So that also Peqin has two buses; one departs from the far end of the town, the other from the centre and this way Peqin's pensioners

> will have public transport, they won't need to carry everything all around! While two of my relatives will get a job and I won't need to help them financially anymore. I told them, but they started laughing; they wouldn't believe that I would send the buses for real. So we Albanians are the cause of our own problems!

Financial and material remittances continue to be an important way in which migrants keep in touch with Albania. The frequency and size of such remittances differed depending on both the changing needs of the immigrant family (whether there were children and what their needs were) and changing perceptions of the obligation to send remittances. In the early years of immigration, the uncertain legal status affected flows of earnings and savings to Albania. Apart from contributing to the immediate survival needs of the family in the homeland, financial remittances were spent on land and construction. Usually the remittances were used for a house or space for a potential business so as to secure self-employment in case of return (see also Dalakoglou 2010).

However, unlike the findings of other research (e.g., Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001; Hemming 2009), this study found that achieving social status in Albania upon an eventual return was not a strong motivator among the participants of this study. Financial remittances were usually sent by male migrants, but there is also evidence that some mothers send remittances to their families, mainly in the form of financial support to elderly parents (see Smith 2009). Nevertheless, the desire of family in Albania for financial remittances has caused tensions and unfulfilled expectations.

> Michelino (male, 46, Florence): People in Albania can never have enough (remitted money)! Our parents can never have enough, neither can the brothers, sisters, cousins… They behave like strangers now because you haven't helped them, but whom to help first? When you have fifty poor people to help, you will help first those closer to you. But the others don't speak to you anymore!… Whom to help first? We are being paid 1,000 euros a month now… But I think that to some people we shouldn't send even a cent! Not even a 100 euros, not to the family, not to anyone! They should go and ask the state for help, those they have voted for and have promised them all those things… Not to come and ask me, ringing my phone all the time.

The narrative above touches on a broader point of debate: would the study of remittances be more informative if the perspective of the senders were considered or that of those receiving remittances in the home country? The impact on the country of origin has been especially popular field of study thus far (Åkesson 2011; King et al. 2011). Even recent projects on remittances (e.g., UN-INSTRAW 2007) do not pay equal attention to the implications of remittance sending among migrants in the destination country. Increasingly, however, scholars are moving away from a focus on the economic dimensions to look at relationships between migrants and those left behind and to explore the nature of the transaction itself (Åkesson 2011).

Recent quantitative research reports diminishing remittances in the medium and long term and establishes a link between remitting behaviour and intentions to return (Jones and De la Torre 2011). However, there is little evidence of an overall shift in migrants' socio-economic commitment from origin to destination. Classic studies on remittances speak of a 'mutual interdependence' established between the migrant and family back home through remittances (Stark and Lucas 1988, p. 479). Yet family expectations can also adversely affect transnational ties. As a result of

negative experiences such as those described by Michelino above, and a lack of appreciation and understanding of the difficulties and sacrifices of migrants in the host countries, return visits may not continue to be regular over time. Mason (2004) reports tensions between returning migrants and their extended family back in Pakistan, but in that case the tensions do not seem to have affected the continuation of visits.

> ZV: Do you visit Albania? Will you go this Easter?
> Merita (female, 52, Thessaloniki): Well, I don't think so…
> Husband: we have to deal with the papers of Kleo. Besides Merita is jobless. In Albania we have to spend. The children don't like to go either. When we return and we have to wait 24 hours at the border… gosh, they can't stand that! We also don't have a place to stay in Tirana any more because when we left we emptied the flat in order to rent it out.

There is thus a mutual change of attitude both among first and second immigrant generations and among those left behind in Albania. Adults see their extended family with different eyes. They feel more independent and focused on their own nuclear family. On the other hand, a noticeable change is perceptible within the collective culture of Albania. Warm welcome from the extended family is no longer guaranteed once everyone has started their own family and the older generation has passed away. Explicitly or implicitly, Albania-based relatives indicate an unwillingness to host visitors 'for free'. As the children grow up, and because of cultural changes on both sides, the first generation no longer considers the sending of remittances to the extended family to be an obligation. This attitude is especially emphasized by migrants in Greece and Italy, who point to the long time spent supporting their families while 'nothing changes in Albania'. Meanwhile, the economies of the countries where they live (especially Greece) have declined. This has discouraged return visits, especially if migrants have no place to stay and must ask extended family to host them.

Buying or constructing a house in Albania helps to resolve the accommodation situation and relieve tensions. Thus, material remittances often consist of houses being built, either as potential family homes or summer houses, in order to facilitate return visits. Otherwise, material remittances take the form of presents to family members—clothes, toys, electrical appliances, televisions or even a bath tub, especially among Albanian migrants in Thessaloniki who travel by bus.

4.2.4 Attitudes Towards Return

Literature on return migration—'the movement of emigrants back to their homelands to resettle' (Gmelch 1980, p. 136)—is growing, although little research has been conducted on factors that affect return. This is despite the fact that attitudes towards and intentions to return have been already identified as an important variable in migration research, since they affect migrants' links to the home country (Alhburg and Brown 1998).

Many Albanian migrants in London, Thessaloniki and Florence contemplate return continually over the years. At the same time, there is a growing uncertainty

towards return. It is common for parents to feel like temporary residents in the host country, while also being aware of the progressive establishment of ties over the time spent there. In many cases, return is seen as definite, but only after a certain number of years. This time 'gap' usually reflects the benefits of staying and working in the host country, and is also dependant on the ages and stage of education of the children. Many parents see return as possible only after children have finished school and university studies and have settled into a job in the host country.

> Qerim (male, 46, London): If it was for me, I would leave tomorrow! When I came my goal was to stay here and earn enough money to buy a house [in Albania]. But as they say in Albania, 'You know [what happens during] the outbound journey, but not the inbound one!' Yet, I am pessimistic about our return, because the children now are at different ages… and you don't want to ruin their future possibilities that might be here… My son says about return, 'Whenever you like now, but later in life I don't guarantee you that I would like to return to Albania.' But then after him we had the girl and she is growing up now, and then the little boy… Maybe return will remain a dream. Because one has to consider the reality.

Some first-generation migrants rule out the possibility of return, despite in many cases planning or desiring a transnational life after they stop working. Life under communism and poverty is referred to as a memory that makes return improbable.

> Farije (female, 45, Florence): For the moment I have told people, 'even when I die, just throw me in some corner. Just don't take me to Albania!' I don't have nostalgia because we suffered a lot in our youth… we suffered to an extreme degree!

The education of children and plans for their future are mentioned as key obstacles to return (see also Teo 2011). However, although children's opposition to return is one of the main reasons stated by the parents as a barrier, parents have their own implicit and unstated dilemmas in regard to return. Sometimes, indeed, it is the children who point these out, remembering discussions they've overheard at home. Parents' uncertainties regarding return relate most of all to employment, as they consider whether they would be able to resume their professional identity or whether they should consider investing. Among the highly skilled, return depends on opportunities and development of a professional career in the host country.

Some consider pension and insurance. Migrants contribute to social security schemes in the host country, and they are aware of the poor services in Albania to support returning migrants in their later-age lives.

> Michelino (male, 46, Florence): It's not that I have made up my mind to stay all my life here, but we have contributed here. I have been working here for 20 years, and in 10 years I will be retiring. I can't go back to Albania, leaving my contributions here. But even if I returned, what will I do there?

Houses and resources accumulated in Albania during the years of migration abroad facilitate plans of return, although such investments can be controversial in the family since they bring up the topic of return, which is usually resisted by the children. Nevertheless, parents see investments made during the migration years as a means to provide employment, for them and their children in case of return. For some, ideas of return are inspired by the economic progress Albania has made and which migrants witness during return visits.

> ZV: Where do you think your children will have a better future?
> Flutura (female, 43, London): If they don't study here, they will go to Albania and work in our shops. You know, I really lost my mind when I went there last time. People have got luxury houses which we don't even dream of here in England. I don't know how they have managed to earn all that money, but still… And it's time Albania gets ready to welcome its people [back]. In 5–10 years Albania has changed.

Sometimes it is the intention to return that inspires investment in the homeland. Intentions and plans to return may be made in the recognition that parents will return on their own and children will remain in the host country.

> ZV: Do you speak in the family about the future?
> Lutfie (female, 36, London): I work too hard and don't have time to start this kind of conversation. They [the children] see their future in the UK. When we discuss going back to Albania, the children don't like the topic at all. My husband and I though, we want to spend our retirement in Albania. We are buying a house there.

Attitudes towards return differed across the three field sites. Intentions to return were more explicitly among the first generation in London. Perhaps this is related to their shorter time of residence there compared to the two other sites, so they are less 'settled'. Unlike what King et al. (2003) found in the pre-regularization stage, now that migrants have achieved their goal of settlement, as they grow older and the children settle in Britain, some parents are contemplating return. Parents would like to go back to their own environment, where kin and other networks are denser and there is greater support, better weather for their retired style of life, and in the case of the skilled migrants, as a way to 'rehabilitate' themselves from the downgraded migrant status and re-establish themselves as professionals.

> Donika (female, 45, London): I see my future in Albania. I would be the first to leave from here! I am more comfortable there. Here especially the climate is a big problem for me. I say to the children as well, 'I would go if it wasn't for you.'

Some parents in Florence are contemplating return or actually returning because the cost of living in Florence makes it impossible for them to save sufficiently to realize their plans for educating their children. Migrants in Thessaloniki mention long-term residence in Greece as a reason to stay, while harsh discrimination and the accumulation of a certain financial capital inspire return. Migrant women see return as improbable; they regret not having gained skills that would facilitate return, because of their work in the domestic sector.

> Monda (female, 50, Thessaloniki): I don't think I am going back to Albania. It's impossible. I left my job there 16 years ago. There are so many new teachers now. The only thing I have there is the house that Enver Hoxha gave us. If I go back, how will I live? I would start a business, but what a shame I didn't gain any skills here. A real shame, we didn't learn a profession. For example, if I learnt to make clothes, or to cook, so I could open a small restaurant and sell pizzas, but we don't know how… Or at least if I had a lot of money I would open a café or start a business. So how can I consider returning to Albania? Unless my children migrate to another country, then I might go back, but even then I can't because there we don't have a pension.

The recent economic crisis in Greece has had serious implications for migrants' attitude towards return. Recent statistics from the Government of Albania show high

numbers of returnees from Greece, 62,639 in 2009 and 50,735 in 2010. Return is expected to affect both migrants and their families, as well as Greek and the Albanian society. To date, very little is known about this phenomenon. Some international media maintain that a large segment of the Albanian community in Greece has returned or plan to return (*The Economist*, 14 January 2012). They also briefly mention that children of migrants are feeling alienated and experiencing difficulties in what is for them a new environment (*Reuters*, 6 April 2012). This phenomenon is expected to increase in light of recent developments in Greece, such as the near bankruptcy of the state and the prospects of a withdrawal from the euro zone and a long economic recovery.

4.3 The Second Generation

4.3.1 Return Visits

Empirical research is growing on return visits of the second generation (see King et al. 2011a, 2011b for a Greek case study and a comprehensive literature review). However, their position within transnationalism theory, with its focus on identities as dynamic entities, is unclear (Duvall 2004, p. 53). In the case of the Albanian second generation, there are two trends in the way return visits are experienced: either as a happy time of holiday celebration or as a 'compromise' with parents who must go to Albania to fulfil family obligations or who choose Albania as a cheap option for the summer break.

Since all of the study participants lived in urban areas in the host society, a main facet of visits to Albania was an experience of freedom, play, nature and village life (see also King et al. 2011b), especially among those who welcomed trips to Albania and viewed them as a happy time. Interestingly, this view is shared by children born in the receiving countries. Many of them had been pleasantly surprised and impressed by Albania's natural beauty. Holiday time is especially enjoyable because of parents' lack of free time to spend with their children in the receiving country. This creates a mental distinction between the two places—the cities where they live for work and school, and Albania for holidays, emotional nourishment and fun. Therefore, for these second-generation participants, return visits produced an idyllic image of Albania. This was especially so for children who had been plucked out of their Albanian environment at an early age and deprived of extended family support. For them, return visits were a chance to 'restore' their childhood, catching up with old friends and making new friends with whom they kept in touch.

> Blerim (male, 13, Thessaloniki): I always stay there in the village, I don't go anywhere else [during the visits]. I don't go to Mamurras [the main town in his region of origin in Albania] or Tirana. I don't like to go anywhere. When I am there, I stay with my cousins. We all go and play all together, because I know everyone there. We are like brothers, because it's a small village, so we all play together… That's what I like, that we are all together.

Return visits to the homeland also invoked memories, cultural rediscovery and longings (see also Le Espiritu and Tran 2002). Galvanized by experiences of traditional Albanian hospitality, family events and socializing, houses being built and so on, adolescents generally express the intention to continue visiting in adulthood. There was also an appreciation of Albania as a tourist destination. But apart from 'pleasure-seeking', this is also an 'emotional tourism' inspired by a feeling of familiarity and comfort (see Basu 2004, p. 153).

Locality is an important factor that shapes the content of return visits and attitudes towards their continuation. Duvall (2003, p. 301) introduced the concept of locality in the study of return visits and transnational movement referring to different countries as destinations for the visits. However, locality (or, perhaps better, translocality, see Brickwell and Datta 2011) is also related to the content and the quality of the return visits. For migrants whose families live in remote villages in northern Albania, where living conditions are harsh and there are few opportunities for leisure activities, return visits were limited to visits to relatives' homes and experiences of nature. Migrants with family in urban Albania had more positive experiences, since there were more entertainment opportunities for teenagers. Most research (e.g., Smith 2002, p. 161) has described visits as a return to parents' hometowns or villages. In the Albanian case, however, the transnational experience is less bound to a particular place, due to the internal migration of many relatives, migrants' building of houses in the capital or other major urban centre (Vullnetari 2012) and the touristic preference of the second generation for beach holidays.

> ZV: Why were you in Albania? Do you go often?
> Lutfie (female, 37, London): We go to Albania for holidays. We go often. Children like to go on holidays to Albania; they can't wait to have their tickets. But when they go there, they get bored easily. Their opportunities to play and get entertained are very limited, there is no electricity for the TV, no park or playground, so the entertainment is running after the cat, catching the chicken, killing the flies… So they ask to go back [to the UK].

As indicated by some of the narratives above, family in Albania is an important reason for return visits. Visiting relatives and friends (Backer 2012) is at the heart of these trips. Yet the role of the extended family in the quality of the return visits is often overlooked in research. In the current study, parents and grandparents figured especially prominently among the extended family. They provided emotional support and praised and cared for children and grandchildren. Parents and children describe this 'special treatment', alongside pampering and affection by other family members in Albania. Gardner (2012, p. 906) describes this strong emotional aspect of return visits:

> Whilst we must beware of essentialisms… emotions such as love are themselves cultural constructs worthy of interrogation, research with children reminds us that, rather than economic transactions, political networks or cultural criss-crossings [important though these are], it is human relationships that ultimately lie at the centre of transnational social fields, linking people and places. In our attempts to see transnationalism through children's eyes, one of the main lessons we learn is that the love that children tend to readily express for their relatives is what keeps those people and places bound together.

The importance of the family is transmitted to, and is still strong in, the lives of the second generation. Girls in particular tend to spend a lot of time with extended family, especially with the grandparents in the family hosting the migrants. They also accompany the family on visits and attend weddings and other family events. Weddings, a life ritual and collective cultural event in Albania, are important occasions for which migrants coordinate holidays in the homeland. Moreover, return visits are not only a source of fun and enjoyment, but also occasions to be present and to provide support to the extended family.

The frequency of visits changes over the life course. When grandparents become elderly, the first generation returns home more often to provide care and support. These opportunities are embraced by many of the second generation, with teenagers expressing their readiness to be present in such situations. The role of other family members, especially similarly aged cousins, can be paramount in inspiring continuation of such visits among second-generation teenagers, as well as the touristic aspect, especially for those in late adolescence.

> Altin (male, 16, London): I usually go for six to seven weeks to Albania every summer holiday. I think… I love it, I mean, I go spend time with my cousins, who are a bit older than me, 20 years old, you know, but um… It's good, we take my cousin, go and see the other cousins in another city. I like to travel, because if I am in Albania, I don't like to just stay at home. I live in Tirana, so I like to go Shkodër, Durrës, Elbasan, wherever I can. Just for fun and to spend as much time with my family, because then after six weeks you have to come back England, more school.
> Mondi (male, 48, Florence): Children are always the same, they always want to go. Because… my brother-in-law has children; it's nine in the family and twelve children. They get together as they are also of the same age. They also keep in touch by phone.

Yet attitudes often change when members of the extended family also migrate to the same city or country. As other research has found, time abroad weakens ties with the homeland. This is especially true among Albanians in Florence. Once the extended family has also migrated, the frequency of return visits becomes less regular, and when they do go, it is mainly to look after their investments in Albania.

> Gjergji (male, 17, Florence): We go to Albania because of belongingness to our nation and our land, let's say, and then we have a few relatives, no? So we go to meet them and for being close to our nation, not to lose the customs… I don't know, there is always a feeling of belongingness to go there, let's say. Even though with every year that goes, this feeling of belongingness is weaker a little bit, because the interests that I used to have there have decreased because my relatives are here now. And then school, friends and all the rest, so I feel more 'tied' here, let's say. I go there for matters of… don't know, economic reasons, the house to repair, and all the rest. Because we have two houses,… We go on holidays let's say; more than anything, to break the monotony of life here in Italy.

Another reason that inspires return visits is the simplicity of life, the collective spirit of people, and the lack of harassment. For teenagers, this simplicity and freedom seem to clash with the pressure of having to make important life choices at the end of adolescence. Those who do not struggle with identity issues may be caught between the economic opportunities in the receiving country and a longing for a life rich in emotional and social support in Albania.

> Admir (male, 14, London): I think I have more fun there. I think people are more caring. I feel more welcome there, more at home. I think if I could have the education I have in England, if I could have that in Albania, I would rather stay in Albania…. I think here where we live, there is… we have a few friends near us, but there is not… You know, people are not kind; they are kinder in Albania. I think you enjoy yourself more. Here [in England] it is mainly for work, school, depending on what you do.

There is, however, a second trend in attitudes towards return visits: teenagers who resist visiting Albania. Discrimination and the negative stereotypes promulgated by the media and beyond in the host country seem to impact teenagers' willingness to maintain ties with Albania. Moreover, teenagers notice the difference in economic development, infrastructure and culture. Furthermore, as King et al. (2011b) found among the Greek and Cypriot second generations, girls feel constrained by the culture and gender restrictions. Aware of the patriarchal family organization, they perceive the places where they return as a 'small world' that allows no room for a young woman's identity to be expressed and further developed. The gender problems and cultural backwardness are also observed by the boys, although they are less frequently mentioned. Some teenage girls experience restrictions from their parents during their holidays in Albania in terms of going out, while others, conversely, observe with awkwardness the liberal attitude towards styles of dressing and relationships among their peers in Albania. This contrast with the values their migrant parents speak to them about.

> ZV: Why do you go to visit Albania?
> Eneida (female, 15, Florence): Because it's my fatherland. I was born there… then because I have my grandparents… When I go there, I feel … really like in my house, so I feel very free… yeah, I feel well, but… well, at times not very free, because of this thing of all those rules to follow… I don't know… Exactly because it's also a male society… and I say this also to my parents. I don't know, if a guy wants to do something then it's alright, and if instead the girl wants to do something, it's not okay.
> Manjola (female, 18, London): When I go to Albania, I mostly talk to my grandmother and aunts, not much with the cousins of my age. They are very 'civilized' and wonder how come I am such a good girl.

Return visits during adolescence tend to become a burden if they are not accompanied by a variety of activities and entertainment. This is especially true for children and teenagers who do not speak Albanian (though in some cases, returning for the summer season is precisely for the purpose of learning the language). They begin to miss friendships and relationships in the host country and want to spend summer holidays there. Though return visits may also result in relationships with Albanian youngsters, such trips in general become less frequent in later adolescence and early adulthood.

Once the second generation comes of age, they often widen their horizon, also making independent visits to other countries and places of interest, for example, where other family members have migrated. As Gowricharn (2009, p. 1634) points out, the second generation's transnational orientation is by no means a 'zero-sum game', and the dichotomy of home-host country reduces the complexity of the ties and the sites of reference to which the second generation refers in their everyday lives. Return visits in adolescence and early adulthood may be part of the socializa-

tion and general cosmopolitanism of that particular age, driven in this case by the feeling of exotic rediscoveries in the homeland.

Return visits and ties with the homeland in general give rise to a comparative transnational appreciation of the opportunities in the home and host country. These ties and comparisons inform and shape teenagers' attitudes towards return to the homeland. This resonates with the work of Louie (2006, p. 566) who observed that multiple frames of reference inform the identity formation of second-generation Chinese and Dominican adolescents in the USA and their views on education. Ilda (female, 14, London) clearly sees herself as 'better off' in London:

> I don't know, if I hadn't come to England, some things wouldn't have changed. I don't know, I have experienced a lot from coming here. When I go to Albania I see children and other girls who would like to be in my place, to come here, have money, have food, go to school and have everything sorted out for you, not having to worry for everything. Whereas over there, people have to pay for everything and they don't have much money… You get to know what they feel. I don't really know, because I came to England when I was five, so I don't know in a way. But when you see them, with their old clothes, I feel sorry for them and you feel like giving them everything.

On the other hand, children may feel mocked if the extended family or locals in Albania find them 'assimilated' and changed. Zinn (2005), likewise, notes that the second generation's experiences on visits to the 'homeland' include instances of encountering barriers to acceptance by Albanian society.

> Alfonso (male, 15, Florence): I am not afraid to say here that I am Albanian, but when I go to Albania they call me Italian! We have remained *stranieri* [foreigners] everywhere! [*smiles*]
> Olta (female, 16, Thessaloniki): We go to our aunties… when I decide to go there I feel so happy, but once I am there, the next day I get very bored, because I see people, what they do all day and get really bored all day… To tell you the truth I get very bored when I go there, because you want to watch TV, the electricity is cut and you say, 'Oh, why I had to come here?!' When there is electricity, we watch TV, we go out sometimes… I try to go out, but I don't even like to go out, because they look at me like wondering which planet I have come from. So I prefer to stay home but I can't kill the time like that, so I get bored and I want to leave as soon as possible.

The way that the second generation experiences return visits varies somewhat by host country. Although two overall trends mentioned above are found across the three sites, the distancing of the second generation from return visits is most evident in Florence. These in London indicate more appreciation of the family and nature in Albania, perhaps because they are mainly from rural northern Albania, which has a 'wild' landscape and strong family values. Those from Thessaloniki either opposed return visits as a result of the discrimination they experienced in Greece and their resulting prejudice towards Albania or they cherished the trips to the homeland as providing a completely different atmosphere filled with care, play and acceptance.

In Britain a 'blocked transnationalism' is prominent among Albanian migrants due to slow regularization. Blocked transnationalism creates estrangement and disrupts children's emotional ties with Albania.

> Lajmir (male, 18, London): If I would go there, I would be a refugee for the second time! I don't know anything. I left when I was 12 years old, a child… Now… I would go once,

to see how things work and then simply… maybe once a year; for the family mostly. And that's it.

Initial adaptation during return visits appears to be more difficult for the children visiting from Britain than for those from Greece and Italy because of significant differences in weather and food. Visits of those living in Greece are more frequent because of the close proximity with Albania.

Daniela (female, 17, Thessaloniki): Let's hope we won't stop going, like we did before when we didn't have papers. If we have papers we go often. Because we can go even for a Saturday or Sunday because it's close; it takes just a couple of hours. Dad goes very often during the weekends.

In summary, transnational ties take a more mobile form and meaning for the second generation than for their parents. Other salient features of transnational ties are material and emotional remittances and exchanges and the character of return trip experiences, based on advantage, convenience, curiosity and escapism.

4.3.2 Transnational Ties Through Technologies

Like the first generation, second-generation teenagers maintain transnational ties through various technologies, including digitally broadcast Albanian TV, the Internet and telephone. The use of CDs, DVDs and other media is common, but not as systematic. Consumption of homeland media is part of daily life for many teenagers. Some teenagers are passive consumers, watching Albanian TV alongside their parents since households often have only one television. If left to choose, most teenagers show a selective approach (see Panagakos 2003), combining programmes from the 'host' country media with homeland digital broadcasting.

Eliana (female, 15, London): It's always on, 24/7. It is only Albanian TV we watch, except when I have my Hollyoaks or Eastenders or something. Other than that, I don't really watch much English TV. I don't really watch Albanian TV, I prefer films and stuff. But I watch, like, Albanian Big Brother is coming up soon. Or I watch music shows, because I like Albanian music a lot. Like half of my music is Albanian, the rest is English. I also watch documentaries about Albania, or just random stuff that's on, I just watch it.

Digital broadcasting plays an important role in informing the second generation about Albania, inspiring curiosity about its history, culture and current issues, and keeping the idea of a homeland alive. Following Albanian programmes is also a way of cultivating double identification and belongingness.

Lira (female, 15, Florence): I am really keen to learn about Albanian history. When it comes to Italian history sometimes I skip it, I don't study it, whereas on Albanian history I always watch documentaries on DigitAlb. This week there was a documentary on Enver Hoxha, which I watched because I was curious to know about him.

Era (female, 14, London): When it comes to TV, I prefer Albanian to English, I don't know… because it has more channels and it is just more interesting to know about your country, like what's going on there, like you need to be informed, even if though you don't live there you like to be updated or whatever. So I prefer like, watching, like Albanian music, Albanian news, Albanian programmes, shows… whatever…. Say a new Albanian

> song comes up I would know it, the same with English… I am kind of both… because it is my country really, no matter how bad it is, I still like it much better than this country because like my family is there and… I like Albanian music and the more years go by I like it better, the more I am into it.

The Internet is another means for teenagers to carry out independent research on Albania and its history and culture.

> Altin (male, 16, London): I always go on Google, on the Internet and type in 'Albania and this' whatever… I have read about Enver Hoxha, I have read about Skanderbeg, you know, Sali Berisha[6] and all that. You know, to pass the time, and learn something about Albania.

Participation of second-generation teenagers in Albanian Internet forums is limited. For example, the Rete G2 Network of Second Generations in Italy, has few posts from the Albanian second generation, even though they constitute one of the most numerous second-generation groups in Italy. The only network organized by the second generation and youth I came across is *Fundjava Shqiptare* (The Albanian Weekend),[7] which, according to its organizers aims to counteract the social disintegration of Albanians. Nevertheless, the site was also a space to for teenagers to express hybrid identities in the making, allowing them to combine youth culture as experienced in the 'host' country with the familiarity of Albanian language and peers. The quote below is taken from the forum of this network and is an example of the combination of the two languages in everyday life:

> Username: London GirL
> bukuranja what do u mean e nesermja moj se me hallakate, [tomorrow because you are messing me up] the party is next month I think ma ngrine gjakun [my heart stopped for a moment], but anyways let me know nese eshte neser [if it's tomorrow] I'd love to come.

Websites and Internet forums can serve as a site to exercise symbolic ethnicity. This is expressed virtually by choosing usernames in chat forums such as 'forever_an_Albanian' or 'Albanian red and black' and using the Albanian flag and other national symbols as profile pictures. Nevertheless, the use of Internet platforms to express ethnic identity and build online communities, as do many second-generation groups (Brower 2006), is relatively limited among Albanians. While research shows websites to be a space for self-expression and cultivating a collective identity (on the Chinese second generation in Britain, see Parker and Song 2007), second-generation Albanians are far more passive and individual in this regard.

Transnational ties through ICTs are dependant on, and also have an impact on, knowledge of the Albanian language. Poor proficiency in Albanian is a main obstacle to teenagers' establishment and maintenance of ties with Albania. Some teenagers improve their written Albanian via online conversations with cousins in Albania. Yet much Internet communication between Albanian second-generation teenagers

[6] Enver Hoxha was the dictator of Albania between 1944 and 1985. Skanderbeg is an historical folk hero, as noted earlier. Sali Berisha was the Prime Minister of Albania when research for this book took place.

[7] www.fundjava.com. Last accessed 18 January 2008. The website and the forum were down in April 2011. The organizers in 2008 noted lack of funding. By the end of 2013 the same group appears as transformed into an events enterprise called ZigZag Events.

takes place in English, especially when it involves the diaspora in North America. Of course, Internet access is an important factor (Panagakos and Horst 2006). The Albanian second generation tends to be in more frequent touch with relatives in other countries through the Internet rather than in Albania due to the greater prevalence of Internet access in countries like Germany, Britain and the USA.

Ties through the Internet can also play a role in keeping in touch with relatives, giving rise to virtual mobilities that interweave kinship and friendship ties (Adey 2010). Increasingly, the Internet provides a means for transnational care and emotional bonding. Telephone calls with grandparents and Internet calls to cousins were common at all of the three sites.

> Drita (female, 45, London): My children are very close to my mother. So when I give them a pound as pocket-money they save it and buy a phone card to talk to her. They really love her. They don't speak often… maybe every two or three weeks. Sometimes they spend the money with their friends and then, when they feel they miss her, you see them showing up with a telephone card. I feel sorry sometimes that they don't spend the money with their friends on chocolates or other things.
> Jonida (female, 15, Florence): With my relatives; we call my grandparents. My mum calls them practically every two days, it's a habit. I also speak to them through the phone, but also through the Internet with a webcam so that we can see each other.

4.3.3 Attitudes Towards Return

There is a growing literature on the return migration of the second generation (Byron and Condon 1996; Chamberlain 2005; King and Christou 2010; Phillips and Potter 2009). We know little, however, about attitudes towards return among second-generation minors, or the conditions and negotiations within the immigrant family that might stimulate or obstruct return. Much research sees the phenomenon of transmigration as a process which in the long term can diverge along different trajectories (Grillo 2007, p. 1999). Three main narrative strands emerge from the interviews of my study. Firstly, a number of second-generation teenagers contemplate return to Albania for better social integration, reunion with the wider family and possible business opportunities. A second trend is represented by the tendency towards 'onward' migration (Newbold 1997), particularly to North-West European countries from Florence and Thessaloniki and in a few cases from London onwards to North America. Finally, some teenagers show a cosmopolitan orientation towards global cities and an eagerness to get to know other cultures. Indeed, for many second-generation teenagers 'return' implies mobilities rather than permanent return (Urry 2007).

The majority of the Albanian second generation is either against or unsure about future permanent return to Albania. Feelings of belongingness to the host country are a main reason for rejecting return. This is seen in a feeling of familiarity with the location where they live and the everyday experiencing of life events there. Lack of fluency in the Albanian language is a further brake on return. Parents are aware of their children's lack of desire to return, mostly due to the structural issues

of reintegration in Albania, in terms of becoming part of various systems which are significantly different from what they are used to. In particular, girls point to the social problems in Albania and difficulties of integration in Albanian society. They notice some of these issues during return visits; for instance, differences in terms of manners and civility and in customer service. A more crucial issue is gender inequality and a feeling of helplessness and that things will not change. Therefore, some teenagers are determined not to return to Albania.

Yet there are factors that 'pull' in the other direction, towards return. After their struggles to integrate in the host society, both parents and the second generation recognize the positive aspects of a potential return to Albania. Recently, this trend towards thinking return has been enhanced by the weak economic situation in the countries where migrants live, especially in Greece. Opportunities for business in Albania were mentioned by the teenagers at all three sites. Teenagers think they may take advantage of the opportunity once they have come of age and secured some financial capital. Experiences and activities in the host country can also serve as inspiration for business plans upon return to Albania.

> ZV: Where do you see your future?
> Alfonso (male, 15, Florence): In Albania…. We will start a business, because here it's very difficult. You need a lot of money. Even an Albanian boy who is last in our class wants to go and start a business in Albania. [*smiles*] There are quite a few Albanians in my school, and everyone wants to go and work there. For example, I would like to go and open there a school for classic ballet dance.
> Angela (sister, 12): Yes, and it would be good to also help the children there because there are many children that need help. I have been to the hospital there and didn't like how it was… So I would like to go to Shkodër and become a cardiologist or a paediatrician.

There are, however, differences between the three cities in terms of teenagers' attitudes towards return. Synthesizing these, intentions to return are affected by the degree of social integration in the 'host' societies and especially experiences of discrimination in the two Southern European cities, in contrast with the multiculturalism of London. Teenagers in London appreciate the broad range of opportunities that they have in Britain, which generally prevents any serious consideration of a definitive return to Albania. A good higher education system and the consequent possibilities to integrate into the labour market are the two main reasons why teenagers and their families indicate plans to continue their stay in Britain. Furthermore, the acquisition of citizenship has 'relieved' some of the worries of integration and given them the possibility to take advantage of options and opportunities in the homeland. However, this is not the whole story: in a few cases, the lack of social integration and the climate are reasons for teenagers to contemplate a return to Albania after education in Britain.

> Eliana (female, 15, London): I would like to go and live in Albania when I am older, because I find myself happier there than here. Here you have friends and stuff, but in Albania it is also the climate, because here it can get a bit sad and depressing because you don't get a lot of sun or anything. Whereas in Albania the climate and atmosphere is much warmer than here. There it's warm, lots of people, everyone would say 'Hi' to you or whatever. Here you just walk down the street, it's raining, no one says 'Hi' to you, everyone is looking down, minding their own business. Um, like Albanians are really friendly when I go, the ones I

have met so far. So hopefully I can go to Albania once I pass, find a good job there, with enough money for me to live with…. because my parents aren't going to stay for all their life here either. They know they want to go and live and die in Albania, as do I.
Altin (male, 16, London): My dream is to do good in school, get a job that pays well, work for 10 to 15 years, but [then] I want to go to Albania and live there, build a house, build a business or something, in Albania before I am 40. It's not that England, London is not a good place; I mean it's good, it's alright, but my home is Albania. I am Albanian, I would rather live there, have family there. Here I have no family, except for my mum, dad, sister, brother. No cousins, no uncles… I would rather live in Albania.

Thoughts about return and plans for mobility are rather more variegated among the second generation at the two southern sites. Some second-generation youngsters are returning to Albania to attend higher education. This is mostly as a result of the difficulties of accessing higher education in Greece. In Albania international colleges offer studies in English, some affiliated with American or Italian universities. In some cases, this results in 'counter-diasporic migration' of second-generation youth (King and Christou 2010), while the first generation is still in the host country.

The opposite trend also exists. A family's experience with migration seems to inspire a more mobile attitude towards their future life and ideas of settlement. Therefore, some teenagers in Greece and Italy are contemplating migration towards more economically successful countries.

Genti (male, 18, Thessaloniki): It doesn't matter. We have grown up here and there. We can go to another country, we can return here; wherever it is, wherever we like to be. Probably in Greece, Germany, England, wherever. I don't have a specific target. If things don't go well, I will go to England…. I would like to go and live there and see how it is.
Viola (female, 14, Thessaloniki): I would like to travel to so many countries. I want to go and see places… I have heard that there are so many different beautiful countries. I have heard England is very beautiful and I like English… So I would like to go abroad.

Teenagers in Florence naturally expressed this flexible attitude towards future migration, based on appreciation of opportunities in Italy, Albania and elsewhere in the world, especially other European countries. Apart from the issue of papers, which conditions their movements at this stage, their understanding of spatial movement, settlement and their geography of thinking in general is broader than that of the first generation. The migration project of the first generation was mainly inspired and oriented towards economic security for the family, better education and better life prospects for the children. In contrast, migration to Italy is sometimes itself seen by the second generation as a way of offering the possibility to encounter and 'practice' cosmopolitanism.

Klejdi (male, 17, Florence): It was good because by changing country you learn, you get to interact with other kind of people, with other cultures, and this is not a bad thing. This changes a lot in a person.

Plans for future migration are interwoven with a cosmopolitan orientation, even if this may ultimately be constrained by resources. This reflects Beck's (2002) view that the focus of cosmopolitan sociology should be on inequality in terms of possibilities to be mobile. Nevertheless, cosmopolitanism is appreciated over 'monocultural' societies by the teenagers because it would ensure their 'invisibility'.

> Xhilda (female, 18, Florence): If I could, I would go to another country to live, but not here in Italy. For example, in London or in Germany. I really like Germany… but it is very difficult to make documents there. And then it's difficult to go and start a life there. Because I am making my life here; what would I do in Germany, wash dishes? I have my life here, my parents… and they are getting old.
> Dana (female, 15, Florence): If you want better prospects you can go and do the university in London. I would like to do that.
> ZV: What would you achieve by going somewhere else?
> Dana: We open our eyes a little bit.
> Xhilda: More money. Culture, you see something else.
> Klejdi (male, 17, Florence): Italy is finished in my opinion.
> Xhilda: Besides, my parents have always moved… since I was very little we were moving to other places. Here and there. We have always tried to improve our lives.
> Dana: Besides, we always look for better in life.

Xhilda, above, also spoke of the cosmopolitan orientation cultivated in communist Albania by her professional parents and their internal migration in an otherwise isolated country. Delanty (2006) states that cosmopolitanism is not only a result of globalization; it can be found in any society where social mechanisms and dynamics give rise to new cultural forms and processes of self-transformation, which in turn transform the social world. Nevertheless, cosmopolitan tendencies are framed between the need to move to a more accepting society where one is more 'invisible' and the genuine desire to explore and know the world. These aspirations are especially evident among the teenagers in Florence, perhaps reflecting their assimilation in Italian society, since a tendency to migrate 'northwards' out of Italy is common among Italian youth (Conti 2008). It is also common among those in Thessaloniki, but less so among the teenagers in London. The tendency to migrate in search of better opportunities is also seen as a legacy of the first generation, as well as a reflection that conditions in the host country are deteriorating.

> Erjol (male, 17, Florence): When I grow up I want to explore the world. Maybe Europe… In my opinion opportunities here will start diminishing because Italy is declining economically… It's declining a lot. So let's see… The future is uncertain in Italy. If I finish school and don't start working, I will go somewhere else. Basically I have seen how my father has lived. He has always gone where there is work. He went to Greece, then came here. He did well here and stayed… Same for me, if I don't do well here, I will go… like my Romanian friend did. He went to London. So basically one goes where there are more opportunities.

Teenagers' attitudes towards mobility go beyond the issues of papers and border crossings. As hinted at in the narratives above, teenagers feel at odds with the idea of crossing the border, the demands for paperwork and the fragmentation of their journey to Albania. Despite institutional constraints, imaginative travel is an important part of these teenagers' future projections.

4.4 Conclusions

This chapter showed that both the first and the second generation develop and maintain various kinds of transnational ties. These ties change over time alongside the process of integration in the host country. As the various patterns of integration and

identification unfold, different kinds of transnational ties are established and the patterns of their maintenance change over the years.

Transnational ties show different patterns between and within the two generations. These differences are demonstrated both in the symbolic elements of these ties and in the more logistical ones. In particular, return visits constitute significant events in the immigrant family. They tend to evoke emotions and feelings of longing and belonging, although also highlighting underlying tensions and differences between parents and children and between immigrants' nuclear family and the extended family and kin networks in the homeland. Return visits stimulate parents and children to question and re-evaluate their identity and related issues such as gender relations, discrimination and the institution of family.

Nevertheless, the first generation usually prioritizes integration over transnational ties, especially in terms of the distribution of family resources and attitudes towards future life goals. The concepts of 'transnational ways of being' and 'transnational ways of belonging' (Glick Schiller 2004) both find support in my data, although each has changed over time. Transnational ways of being are much more common among both the first and the second generation. Transnational ways of belonging are more emphasized among the first generation, although this belonging is mainly to the past spent in Albania and to their families, rather than a symbolic belongingness expressed in the name of a group towards a homeland. In turn, the geographical approach, emphasizing space and place, and associated mobility tendencies and orientation are more a second-generation phenomenon, and members of the second generation also show tendencies towards cosmopolitanism. Whilst both the first and the second generation demonstrate forms of 'strategic cosmopolitanism'—the capability of vulnerable individuals and groups to understand and negotiate cultural diversity in order to live in environments characterized by insecurity (Kothari 2008)—the teenagers are significantly more prone towards mobility and cosmopolitan imaginaries and practices.

The spatial references in these teenagers' narratives indicate both global-to-local and local-to-local dynamics, in addition to transnational ties. Firstly, the locus of integration for the second generation goes beyond the host and home country discourse. In this particular case, feelings of integration and cosmopolitan orientation counter the perception of the national realm as the locus for integration. A glocalized cosmopolitanism (Roudometof 2005) seems to explain their relations with culture and space. Talking about different degrees of attachment to particular cultures, locales and regions, Roudometof (2005) employs the concept of glocalization—the transforming effect of globalization at a local level—to operationalize the cosmopolitan-local continuum. He concludes that a combination of both global and local forms of identity is very possible.

This study joins previous research in challenging the taken-for-granted continuation of remittances and in acknowledging that in some cases and among some groups remittance flows decrease or stop. Therefore, the picture is far more complicated than 'migrants are the original givers while those left behind are more or less passive receivers' (Åkesson 2011, p. 337). Moreover, migrants in this study engaged in discourses on cultural change and individuality and, more importantly,

on civic responsibility and government accountability in relation to those left behind and obligations to support them financially. This perhaps relates to the contrast between the ambiguous understanding and adoption of neo-liberalism in Albania and strands of thinking and a return towards welfare in the Western world, experienced by migrants in the receiving societies (see also Reeves 2012). While collective remittances and engagement in developmental programmes is unusual among Albanian migrants, despite this also being the case among migrants from other post-communist countries (Isabaeva 2011), the discourse of some migrants indicates a shift from the obligation to regularly support family and kin to certain social and economic enterprises that would affect the community welfare and alleviate social problems. Future research could explore these discourses in greater depth within immigrant families and during return visits to Albania, as well as attitudes among the second generation.

In terms of differences between the three sites, the findings of this chapter are very much in line with one of the classic writings of transnational studies. Glick Schiller et al. (1995, p. 50) maintain that the conduct of transnational lives is related to three main contextual factors: the history of immigration and modes in which immigrants are received in the host country; migrants' cultural resources; and discrimination and hostility faced by an immigrant group. Furthermore, the state is a major factor in conditioning and shaping transnational ties (Joppke and Morawska 2003; Levitt and Jaworsky 2007). This is especially true regarding return visits and other spatial mobilities, for which the mechanism of regularization plays a crucial role. Because discrimination was much stronger and more persistent at the two southern research sites, transnational ways of being and belonging were much weaker in Thessaloniki and Florence, along with the phenomena of identity contraction and mimicry (Romania 2004). In turn, transnational mobilities were severely obstructed by the irregular nature of Albanian migration and the long process of regularization:

> A study of mobilities must be able to simultaneously normalize an array of forms of mobility but not minimalise the ways in which legal status, as well as global racialising categories, can make a world of difference in terms of the ease of travel, the repercussions of trying to move, and whether or not the traveller gains or loses status from being from elsewhere (Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013, p. 188)

The current study's findings support Vertovec (2009, p. 80), who maintains that the relationship between transnationalism and integration is not a zero-sum game. They are also in line with Dahinden (2009, p. 11), who found that the longer migrants stay in the receiving country, the less transnational they are, and the strength and proportion of transnational ties diminishes as the duration of stay increases—an argument that supports assimilation theory. In this study, integration and transnational ties interact in different ways: for some, the more integration, the weaker their transnational ties. But certain transnational ties, such as those maintained using ICTs continue to exist through the integration process. It appears that integration and transnational ties do develop at different paces; moreover, certain transnational ties develop progressively, but others do not. Transnational ties through ICTs have been rising and evolving, from telephone to TV to Internet and Skype. Return visits, however, were initially obstructed by lack of papers; they developed in intensity

Fig. 4.1 'Keen transnationals': Albanian migrants in Greece returning to Albania for Easter 2008 through the Kapshticë -Xristalopigi border point

after regularization, and then ceased or were reduced because of clashes with kin or disappointments with the way migrants were treated in the home country. Or in some cases they increased because of (perceived) business opportunities in Albania.

The data on the role of kin and locality support the view of Nagel (2002) and Olwig (2003) that a broader approach is needed focusing on socio-cultural systems in relation to migrants' life trajectories and fields of interpersonal ties and on culture as produced and reproduced the nation-state in migrant households, neighbourhoods and workplaces. The typology offered by Faist (2000b), comprising transnational kinship groups, transnational circuits and transnational communities, is not fully supported by the data. These constructs are based on the principle of reciprocity either within kinship groups or within circuits crossing countries, or the more symbolic reciprocity over time and space, which are rather missing among Albanian migrants and their descendants (Fig. 4.1).

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