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**Between dreams of papers and a house:
Everyday life of Albanian undocumented
migrant women in Greece**

Supervisor: Katarina Jacobsson

Author: Flora Olsson

Abstract

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This research draws attention to the way undocumented Albanian immigrant women experience their everyday life in Greece. Which are the structural factors experienced by Albanian undocumented immigrant women that defines their everyday life in Greece and what strategies are used by these women in order to resist these macro-structural factors. Qualitative interviews were held with 11 undocumented Albanian migrant women and 3 Albanian immigrant women that are leaders of Albanian associations in Greece. The interviews were analysed through a theoretical frame work that pays attention to the structural factors as much as to the human agency. The research showed that factors that have contributed in putting Albanian women in a certain position are the following. First, unemployment in Albania, in the context of economic restructuring has caused these women to migrate. Secondly, they cross the borders undocumented. The act of migration without documents is seen as an act of resistance undertaken by these women in order to resist economic structures. Thirdly, these women are found at the lowest level of the labour market i.e. in the informal economy, doing domestic work, like cleaners, taking care of children, elderly and disabled. They experience difficult working conditions based on gender and race. Even though they face employment insecurity i.e. lacks of jobs; working part-time; in daily and hourly basis etc, they still find ways of how to cope with this situation. Even though they have limited opportunities to plan their future and have experienced exploitation from lawyers in acquiring documents, they still dream about fixing papers in Greece and building a house in Albania.

Key words: Global capitalism, precarity, domestic work, racism, Albanian undocumented migrant women, Greece.

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1. Introduction

Migration for the purpose of employment has been a survival strategy for Albanians since the fall of the communist system in the 1990's. With the fall of the commanded economy and with the transition towards an open market economy, Albanian citizens themselves, rather than the state, have had to make their way out of poverty. There were no jobs, either for women or for men and unemployment, therefore, became a huge problem for the country. Being subjected to such circumstances, Albanians migrated in search of work. They migrated, primarily, to neighbouring countries; that is, Italy and Greece.

Although some women left Albania together with their husbands and fathers, generally speaking, Albanian men were the first to migrate. The women were left behind to take care of the family where they became isolated subjects; concentrated in the private sphere, namely home (Lazaridis 2000). This served to reinforce gender stereotypes.

Albanian migrants in Greece were without documentation until 1998 when the Greek government began to implement so-called 'regularizations schemes' (Lazaridis 2000). Migrants could begin the process of acquiring the necessary documents required by the government to fulfil the requirements made by laws of the aforementioned regularization schemes. Upon fulfilling these requirements, migrant's family members could follow them to the receiving country; through the family reunification strategy.

A woman entering the receiving country through the family reunification strategy is referred to as a 'dependent immigrant'. She is dependent on her husband; i.e. on his documents, his job, his health insurance etc. (Vullnetari 2009). However, as Vullnetari (2009) argues, we should be careful not to underestimate the economic role of Albanian women. They migrated not only to join their husbands, but also for the purpose of employment and therefore these women contribute to the economy of the household.

In the context of a poor welfare state as well as still existing gender stereotypes in Greek families regarding women's reproduction work, Greek women, in order to participate in the formal labour market, hire migrant women to do what Greek women were expected to. There exists, therefore, a demand for domestic workers in Greece which is met by migrant women. Migrant women, in this case Albanian

women, work in the private sphere, i.e. doing domestic work, such as house cleaning, cooking, taking care of children, elderly and disabled.

They work in difficult working conditions, working long hours for little money etc. Racism is also a major problem that is experienced in an everyday life of Albanian women in Greece (Lazaridis 2000; Anderson 2000; Charalampopoulou 2004; Vullnetari 2009).

There have been many studies done on the above-mentioned category of women. But little research has been conducted into undocumented immigrant women, especially in more recent years. It is perceived that immigrants in Greece, nowadays, can require documents in the context of regularization schemes, but the reality is that not everyone is able to fulfil the necessary criteria required by the state. Thus, there has not been enough attention by researchers on the issue of undocumented migration, particularly in Greece.

It is assumed that Albanian women nowadays enter Greece through the family reunification strategy. The fact that the Greek state has undertaken the step of the regulation of immigrants through the so called “regularization schemes” has hidden the problem of undocumented migration. Lazaridis (2000) argues that the effects of regularization schemes remain to be seen in the future. This study will explore the experiences of those Albanian women that have not been able to enter Greece by this means. They cross the borders, instead, undocumented.

Before I discuss the issue of undocumented migration in general, I will describe why I use in this thesis the terminology “undocumented immigrants” and not for example “illegal immigrants”. I use the term “undocumented immigrants” instead of the term “illegal” migrants” in order to impact in the denaturalization of the meaning of the term “illegality” as argued by (De Genova 2002 p.420). That is, as a result of the association of “illegality” with criminality, and most of undocumented immigrants are not criminal. Also, labelling people as “illegal” can be considered as denying them their humanity. Furthermore, “a human being can never be “illegal”, as otherwise the right of everyone to recognition everywhere as a person before the law would be violated” (Bicocchi & LeVoy 2007 p.5).

Looking broadly at the phenomenon of undocumented migration, there are a considerable number of undocumented women in European countries (Anderson 2000). The prevalence of undocumented border crossing and spatial expansion

has greatly increased in recent decades and has become an important subject in public debate in Europe (Khosravi 2010 p.95).

Immigration restrictions have not stopped migration. Once undocumented immigrants have entered the receiving country, only a minority are deported. The problem with the restrictive and stringent laws of migration, is that, since they cannot stop migration, migrants seek to enter by irregular channels. As a consequence of such stringent laws, the state control over the direction and pattern of migrant labour is abandoned rather than intensified.

Undocumented workers are extremely vulnerable. They experience the constant fear and insecurity of deportation on a daily basis. As human beings, according to the UN convention, undocumented immigrants have basic human rights (Bicocchi & LeVoy 2007). But when these basic rights are abused they have nowhere to turn for help. They cannot approach the authorities to protect them as undocumented citizens for fear of deportation. Even during times of sickness which often occurs as a consequence of being exposed to difficult working conditions, they are too afraid to go to the doctor. Furthermore, it has been reported that if an undocumented migrant woman was to fall pregnant she may lose her job and have no rights to health care during the extent of the pregnancy or the birth. Children then born to undocumented woman don't get an education or any health care.

Being undocumented gives the employer power over the worker. If employers are not satisfied with the performance of an undocumented worker, they call the police to have them deported. The police are also called when the employer wants to avoid paying their wages.

Even though the rights of undocumented workers are documented in international human rights agreements, these rights are systematically abused. Predominantly, undocumented immigrant women work in sectors of the informal economy, which are barely regulated and are characterized by exploitative wages.

They work in difficult working conditions. Undocumented women, have problems with the payment. There are cases where they do not receive the payment or they receive less than were agreed upon. When they suffer problems emanating from work, the lack of documents makes it difficult to get worker's benefit. When they get deported as a result of the lack of documents, they have little opportunity or not at all, to the right to receive the lost wages (Schmelz 2008).

Knowing (as it has been described above) that generally undocumented immigrant women have found themselves in difficult situations after fleeing their country in search of work, this study will look more specifically into the case of Albanian immigrant women.

The main reason I have chosen to conduct this research is because I myself have had first-hand experience being an undocumented woman in Greece. And, I hope that, by illuminating the current problems incurred by undocumented immigrant women, I will be able to give these women a voice; a voice that will be heard and given the attention it deserves.

Also, since Greece has been affected by the economic crisis, it is important to study the predicaments of the most vulnerable groups of society, specifically, undocumented immigrants. As Appay (2010 p.37) contends, even though in an economically insecure situation all of society is affected, not all parts of society are impacted equally.

Furthermore, recognizing that there has not been done enough studies in the exploration of the situation of undocumented immigrant women in Greece in general and that of Albanians in particular, regarding the process of acquiring documents (Lazaridis 2000), it is important to explore their experiences related to this process also.

1.1. Aim of the study and research question

This study aims to explore the situation of undocumented Albanian immigrant women working and living in Greece. How do Albanian undocumented migrant women experience their everyday life in Greece?

The sub-questions that derive from the main question are the following:

1. Which are the structural factors experienced by Albanian undocumented immigrant women that defines their everyday life in Greece?
2. What strategies are used by these women in order to resist these macro-structural factors?

To answer these questions this paper is divided in four parts. First I will make a review of the literature regarding migrant women. I will mainly focus at the living

and working conditions. Which are the factors that have led these women to particular living and working conditions and how have these women responded to them. Secondly, I will present the theoretical frame work which derives from the concepts of global capitalism, domestic work, gender, race and precarity. Thirdly, I will describe the methodology, which includes the process of data collection, semi structured interviews and the limitation of the research. In the analysis part, I will present shortly the stories of my interviewees. The material is divided in three themes. First I present the part where it shows that these women experienced no future in Albania; their flight and their arrival. Secondly, I present the section that includes finding a job in Greece and their precarious working conditions. Thirdly, I present the future plans of these women. The paper finally concludes by emphasizing, which are the factors that have defined the situation of Albanian immigrant women in Greece and how these women have resisted these factors.

1.2. Review of the literature

The following literature review will briefly outline previous research from scholars in the field of immigrant women. Specifically, it will focus on the issue of working and living conditions of migrant women. This section will not only show certain living and working conditions of immigrant women researched from feminist scholars, but also, the focus will be to explore certain factors that are discussed by scholars, which have impacted the situation of immigrant women.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the reader with background information regarding the issue of living and working conditions of migrant women, as well as the rationale and justification for the research problem (Bui 2009 p.121). Thus I am going to write the main findings of other scholars in the field and especially those findings that relate to my study. There are some studies that have been done on the experiences of living and working conditions of migrant women. The best example to mention, and which relates to my study, is the study about the living and working conditions of live-in and live-out domestic migrant workers made by Anderson (2000) in 5 European cities- Berlin, Paris, Bologna, Barcelona and Athens.

She explored the difficulties met by immigrant women in the employer-employee relationship, their salaries, the kind of work they do, where they live, their

recruitment process etc. Anderson (2000) argues that migrant women domestic workers are differently positioned in the labour market when compared to the middle class women who employ them. Domestic workers basically reproduce the status of the female employer which is, as above mentioned, the middle class women. She argues that a class division has emerged in the context of a welfare state reduction in developed countries as well as the gender divisions which place men and women in different position. Man is supposed to participate in public life while women are expected by the society to concentrate on the private sphere.

She further argues that gender and racist stereotypes, as well as citizenship and immigration status (the relation of migrants to the state), determines their working and living conditions.

Regarding immigration status, she argues that women who are undocumented are in a more difficult situation compared to others. Putting it in Anderson's words, "Your passport is your life". This highlights the consequences of the lack of documentation. She argues that gender stereotypes are seen in immigration laws that make women dependent on the male breadwinner.

Overall she contends, that the main variables behind the situation of immigrant women are, Global capitalism and Patriarchy. That is, these women are found in certain position i.e. in the private sphere, doing domestic work under difficult living and working conditions as a consequence of global capitalism that reinforces gender and racial stereotypes.

Anderson (2000) touches on the concepts of production (the material production) and reproduction (the reproduction of human beings - taking care of children, elderly and disabled and domestic services). She argues, based on the feminist view, that, "Domestic labour produces a commodity which is absolutely central to capitalism: labour power itself (Anderson 2000 p.12)."

There is a critical relation between capitalist production and unpaid work in the home which must be taken into account. However, since the dominant system in a global scale is global capitalism, the reproduction issue is left aside. She wants to give the proper importance to the issue of reproduction. In other words, she stresses that reproduction must have the same attention as production has. They are two inseparable concepts.

Parreñas (2001) studied the living and working conditions of Philippine migrant women in Rome and Los Angeles. She touches on the issue of the labour market

position and the transnational households of migrant Philippine women, comparing the experiences of Philippine migrant women in Los Angeles and Rome. Her study poses the question of why Philippine migrant domestic workers in two different countries (America and Italy) face similar problems; why these women are at the same dislocation. Her answer is, that mostly, it is global capitalism that places these women in the same dislocation, even though they are living and working in different countries.

Parreñas (2001) defines the concept of dislocation as “the positions into which external forces in society constitute the subject of migrant Philippine domestic workers” (p. 3). She analysed this case, by using three level of analysis i.e. the globalization and the macro level of analysis; intermediate level of analysis and subject level of analysis. She emphasizes that immigrant women resist to larger structural forces (global capitalism system and patriarchy) by responding to the dislocations that these systems have generated in their lives (p.33).

Such resistances to power Foucault (1978, 1983) refers as “immediate struggles” (cited by Parreñas 2001 p.33). Parreñas (2001) further argues, that “the notion of immediate struggle is [...] the turn taken by subjects against their condition of their formation” (p.33).

On the whole, Parreñas contends that migrant Philippine women resist the structural factors by using their agency. This does not guaranty the change as they might only re-recreate structures. However, still she argues, that since the macrostructures that dislocate these women are deployed only in action, they are constituted by practices that create and maintain institutions. As a result, these macrostructures can be converted by the rearrangement of these constitutive practices.

During the process of resistance Butler (1997), cited by Parreñas (2001) argues:

The subject does not escape the external forces to which it is bound, but instead its actions exceed the forces of its constitution. It is precisely through this conditioned agency that subjects intervene to shape the process and condition of their constitution (p.34).

For example migrant Philippine women resist their downward mobility of migration by stressing and taking advantage of their higher wages in the receiving countries when compared to their sending countries.

In other words, Parreñas argues that migrant Philippine women might use their human agency to resist the macro-structural process. But also it happens that through their action they might just re-create the structural inequalities. The change is not impossible but it is difficult to achieve it. Or the change can be achieved even though it can be a slow process.

She argues that similarities of the experiences of these two groups of women (In Los Angeles and Rome):

Do not emerge out of some ontological similarity in institutions globally. They emerge from a particular process of globalization – global restructuring and its corresponding macro-processes, which include but are not limited to the formation of the economic block of post-industrial nations, the feminization of labour, the unequal development of regions, the heightening of commoditization in late capitalism, and the opposite turns of nationalism (p.247).

Parreñas (2001) touches on the concept of racism by arguing that Philippine migrant women have experienced racism in both countries, even though probably to a larger extent in Italy due to the migration law restrictions on domestic workers. (p.244). She stresses that there exists a similar migrant position between migrant Philippine women in Rome and migrant Philippine women in Los Angeles as they experience partial citizenship; maintain transnational households; contradictory class mobility - they have a college education but work in domestic work so they have an incompatible social status in the labour market.

Parreñas (2001) emphasised that women expressed that the domestic work impacted on their intellectual development. They said that generally speaking, domestic work gradually made them stupid. She further stated that economic restructuring in the Philippines has forced these women to migrate in search of better paid jobs, even though the jobs that they acquire in the receiving country is generally low paid and undervalued.

The study made by Sassen (1998) called “Global Cities and survival Circuits” tells us how an international division of labour is created in the context of

globalisation. Migrant women are found in the lowest paid jobs, and they are found performing the most precarious/insecure work.

She contends that a serving class is created by catering to the needs of the professional workers in the global cities. They work in the domestic sphere. The work that used to be done by the women from the developed countries, is now done by immigrant women, in order that local women can participate in the formal labour market.

Women from developed countries are able to participate in the formal labour market at the expense of immigrant women. Generally, neoliberal governmental politics do not support women in developed countries, failing to encourage them to participate in formal labour markets. Sassen (1998) emphasises that even though there is a high demand for their services, workers get low paid. Women from sending countries are forced to migrate because of unemployment in the context of economic restructuring.

Bradley & Healy (2008) studied the working conditions of migrant women in Britain. They indicate how, in the context of globalisation, a division of labour is created which delegates migrant women to the secondary labour market or to the informal economy.

They studied how gender and racism, in the context of economic restructuring, impact the labour market position of migrant women. Bradley & Healy (2008) studied the intersection of nationality, ethnicity, gender and class, in the life of these women who come from four different ethnicities: African, African-Caribbean, Indian and Pakistani.

Bradley & Healy (2008) also analysed the concept of flexibility, "Flexibility refers to the ability of employers and organizations to make rapid changes in their deployment of labour and other resources (p.9)."

They describe the concept of flexibility in an expanded way. The concept of flexibility was first applied to make the firm flexible and was part of the discussion which hypothesised a change from Fordism to post-Fordism systems of production (p.9).

Bradley & Healy (2008) proceeds by arguing that, various strategies of flexibility have been introduced to counter the believed rigidities of Fordist production (the mass production of uniform items). The term then expanded to the labour market in which the employees can easily change between jobs and occupations (p.10).

Female workers were preferred by employers as they were more willing to accept flexible jobs; changes in working conditions; part-time jobs and other forms of nonstandard employment. These scholars emphasise that other weak or vulnerable groups like ethnic minorities and young workers, are disproportionately employed to enhance flexibility and are less powerful to resist the flexible working conditions (p.10).

They also emphasise that the concept of flexibility was given another meaning i.e. to give freedom to the employees to decide on the working schedule. However, they argue that even though the concept of flexibility is perceived as giving the freedom to the employees to decide on working schedules e.g. in the case of women, and especially lone mothers, that have to reconcile work and family, there is another side to the coin. They argue that the negative side of flexibility is that it has served to create low-paid, insecure, part-time and temporary jobs which are unduly filled by women, immigrants and young people. As a result, these groups are vulnerable to unemployment and poverty (Bradley & Healy (2008) p.10).

They also mention the “feminisation of employment” concept. One trend that has emerged since the 1950’s, especially in the developed countries, has been the increased participation of women in the formal labour market. Feminisation is linked to broader changes in economic capitalist societies - namely the move from manufacturing to services. Women, in contrast to men, are seen as naturally equipped to work in services that have elements of care. Therefore, men may resist being employed in service jobs.

Many jobs are classified by skills or features connected to women like, nurturing and caring, dealing with people etc. (Bradley & Healy (2008) p.12). Also, they emphasised that in the context of globalisation, women are constrained to move across the world in search for work. They are concentrated in the occupations that society supposes that are for women like domestic services etc. (p.12). They further argue based on the argument of Castles & Miller (1998) that migration itself is being feminized. However, the jobs that are available to these women are often insecure or vulnerable and inadequately remunerated (p.13).

Lastly, when it comes to racism, they argue following Morris, that “racialised patterns of difference are country-specific” (Morris 2002 in Bradley & Healy 2008). This is because there are a number of factors that impact the labour position of minorities which include:

the past history of in and out migration, the particular ethnic groups who constitute the majority of immigrants, the particular immigration regime of the country and the types of labour contract with which they entered (Bradley & Healy 2008 p.13).

Sager (2011) studied the experiences of asylum seekers or undocumented immigrants (rejected asylum seekers who carry on staying in Sweden). The main aim of her study was to make visible the experiences of undocumented immigrants, and put them on the centre of critical debates regarding migration, welfare and gender regimes in Sweden. She makes an analysis of experiences of the gendered migration as well as shows how the conditions of the Swedish welfare state in administration policies have changed. Sager (2011) explores the experiences of undocumented migrants from an intersectional perspective, including the intersections of belonging and nationality with gender as well as race/ethnicity. She points out how segregation migration policies and practices produce undocumented immigrants.

The studies done in the precarity or insecure situation of immigrants by the feminist activist group in Spain (*Precarias a la deriva* 2004) is about the experiences and lives of women in the precarious labour market. *Precarias a la deriva* (2004) extended the experiences of these women in other areas of life and not only in labour market. According to them, there is a connection between work and other aspects of life.

Relying on the understanding, that working conditions have to be connected to other areas of life, the group composed of undocumented migrants, female activists, migrants residents, web designers, domestic and care workers etc., began a research project by exploring their own and collective experiences in the labour market, home, streets and places connected to flexibilisation of the labour market; the withdrawal of welfare state; the restricted migration policies and the international division of labour or the global restructuring of care work. They managed to explore the working conditions in the most precarious labour market in Spain. *Precarias a la deriva* (2004) analysed how working conditions relate to other life areas of these women in the city as well as to the global structures and processes.

The study made with Albanian immigrant women in Greece was that of Lazaridis (2000), who studied the living and working conditions of Albanian and Philippine women in Greece. She touched on the concepts of racism, gender and legal status and how they interact with each other, in placing immigrant women in certain position, or as she puts it “multiple layers of oppression”. She also gives the characteristics of the demand for domestic workers in Greece in the context on an inadequate welfare state. Further, she stresses that the informal economy existing in Greece, which is the biggest in Europe, has served to facilitate the employment of undocumented immigrants. Furthermore she argues that the religion factor in Greece contributes to the different treatment of immigrant women according to their religious affiliation. Subsequently, Albanian women are not as welcomed in Greece as Philippine women, as the first generally comes from Muslim tradition and the later comes from Christian tradition.

In addition, she mentions the push factors of receiving countries and political instabilities as in the case of Albania, are factors that push these women to migrate in an irregular way.

Finally, Lazaridis (2000) mentioned the issue of the regularization schemes that Greek government had started to implement since 1998. She said that the effects of these regularization programs remain to be seen. Actually, this is a sub-question that my study will try to give an answer. It is interesting to take more information about this issue i.e. if immigrant women have tried to follow this procedure and how is their situation with respect to acquiring documents.

Also, the study made by Charalampopoulou (2004) gives us information about the living and working conditions of Albanian women in Greece. She touches the notion of labour market position; gender and racial stereotypes; reconciliation of work and family; housing - who found out that these women live in old houses; houses that have been abandoned by Greeks. Charalampopoulou (2004) touches the issue of supply (unemployment in Albania) and demand in Greece for domestic workers.

However, as she mentions, “what is certain is that one piece of research and especially so small in its sample on this subject is not enough (p.102).”

Further she states, more studies need to be done concerning migrant women in Greece. Vullnetari (2009) similarly, studied the economic role of Albanian migrant women; their role in the migration processes and the labour market

position of these women. They are concentrated in the private sphere, namely domestic work. She emphasizes the problems that Albanian migrant women face having a depended status on the male-breadwinner, as they generally enter Greece under family reunification strategy.

Vullnetari (2009) stresses, subsequently, that:

their stay in the host country as well as their ability to access formal employment, social support, and healthcare are depended upon their husband's situation: his paperwork, his formal employment, and his ability to hold on to a long-term job (p. 22).

This means, that if the husband is not able to fulfil the above mentioned requirements, the woman also will not be able to claim her rights, as she is totally reliant on the male breadwinner.

In conclusion, with respect to the aim of the literature review in this section, I have tried to give an overview of the working and living conditions of immigrant women made by feminist scholars. It has been shown that immigrant women are found in so called 'women's work'; concentrated in domestic services, that is, taking care of children, the elderly and the disabled. They work in the informal economy; in the private sphere where it is out of state's control. That means that they are vulnerable to any abusive treatment from employers. They experience gender and racist stereotypes as well as they suffer from undocumented immigrant status.

Feminist scholars, explain the position of women in domestic sphere as a consequence of gender stereotype assigned by society which expects women to be in the private sphere. Also, feminist scholars explain the undocumented status or the relationship of immigrant women with the state, as a consequence caused by migration laws that represent still women as dependent on the male breadwinner. Women that enter the receiving country as dependent on their husbands, do not have the right of residence on their own. If they get divorced for example, they are deported immediately to the sending country.

Also, the position of women in the domestic sphere, in the context of economic restructuring or in the context of the implementation of the capitalist system (which is a global phenomenon), is explained by racial stereotypes that expect

ethnic minorities and immigrant women to be more suitable for domestic services as they do not deserve better jobs or better working conditions.

The reasons behind the situation discussed by feminist scholars of migration are the following. They strongly emphasize that the economic restructuring has had an impact on the position of women in both, sending and receiving countries. In other words, the tendency of the implementation of the capitalist system globally, has made that the private sphere, i.e. the reproduction of human beings on a daily basis (bringing up children, taking care for elderly and disabled as well as doing domestic services), not to have the proper attention.

The capitalist system is focused mainly on the issue of production by leaving the reproduction issue aside. Feminist scholars point out that Global capitalism reinforces gender and racist stereotypes which even though they do not have an equal existence in every country, they still exist. Finally, they argue that as a consequence of the intersection of gender and race in the context of global capitalism, a class is created in which immigrant women are referred to as the “serving class”. Some scholars have named the insecure and low status of immigrant women as a precarity situation.

Feminist scholars have pointed out, that even though migrant women are found in difficult working and living conditions as a result of the above mentioned factors, that does not mean that they have not been able to change the situations in which they were found in the sending countries. They have definitely been able to raise themselves up and move forward. For example, they enter the receiving country; be that through family reunification strategy or undocumented, and they work; they earn money, even though they earn the money in difficult working and living conditions and are low paid for the amount of work they do.

The aim of this thesis is to extend the discussion about the effects of global capitalism in migrant women and how these women have responded to these macrostructures, by specifically studying the everyday life of Albanian undocumented immigrant women in Greece.

The following represent the theoretical framework which is used to explain my findings.

2. Theoretical framework

The purpose of this chapter is to search for theoretical concepts that are able to grasp or allow me to approach the everyday life of undocumented Albanian immigrant women in Greece. The focus will be to discuss how global capitalism has impacted women at an international level, including immigrant women and how these women have responded to macro-structures.

2.1. Global capitalism

Capitalism is a system of social and economic regulation that has expanded to a high degree in the context of globalisation. Capitalism is reinforced through neoliberal policies which believe that development and modernisation is enhanced by the free market (Perrons 2004). In the context of globalisation, which is, as described by Perrons (2004), the “growing interconnectedness and interdependencies between countries on a global scale” capitalism is globalised (p.1). Globalisation can be described as the global circulation of capital, goods, services, as well as information, ideas and people.

According to the Marxist feminist perspective, the negative side of global capitalism as a system of social and economic regulation, is that, it does not pay enough attention to the reproduction aspect. There exists a gender construction of divisions between capitalist production and human reproduction (Acker 2004; Anderson 2000). The separation between commodity production in capitalism, and reproduction of human beings, has been regarded by Marxist feminist scholars, as the essential process in women’s subordination in capitalist societies.

This system of how life is organised, carries opposing potentials, as the aim of production is toward the goal of accumulating capital and not meeting the reproductive needs of people. Women have been made responsible to perform both the unpaid work in the family as well as positions that result in them having a lower status and lower payment than men. Feminists have been concerned about the relationship between domestic work and capitalism. In the next sub-section I will describe the relation between capitalism and domestic work.

2.2. Domestic work

Domestic work, as mentioned elsewhere in this thesis, is the whole range of activities, from house work, like cleaning, cooking, taking care of children, the elderly and the disabled (Anderson 2000). The problem is that the capitalist system perceives domestic work as unproductive work. In other words, domestic work is perceived as work that does not make a profit. This kind of perception, as a consequence, downgrades domestic work's social and economic contribution and validates its invisibility.

Marxist Feminists argue that domestic work creates a commodity which is unquestionably important to capitalism. It produces labour power itself. Marx indicated this important relationship between domestic work, or unpaid work at home, and capitalist production, in his theory of surplus value. He argued that the cost of reproduction of labour power is a mandatory cost both to maintain the worker as a worker and of raising him/her into a worker (Anderson 2000 p.12).

Engels explained this:

According to the materialistic conception, the determining factor in history is, in the final instance, the production and the reproduction of immediate life. This, again, is a twofold character. On the one side, the production of the means of subsistence, of food, clothing and shelter and the tools necessary for the production; on the other side, the production of human beings themselves, the propagation of species (Engels 1884:4. Cited in Anderson 2000).

Reproductive work is mental, physical and emotional labour. It creates not simply labour units, but people. It is of importance to emphasise that domestic work is not only confined to the family. It also refers to the continuation of modes of production and social reproduction and their connected relations such as those of gender, race, class and generation. Marxist Feminists strongly emphasise that production and reproduction, in the broad sense, are strongly connected to one another. They point out that the reproduction issue needs the same attention from governance systems as production gets.

The restoration of neoliberalism as the dominating economic system, has produced validity for reducing welfare state programs and has reinforced the claims of non-responsibility in many countries, even though this might vary greatly. Simultaneously, some fragments of reproductive services move into

capitalist economy, becoming accessible only to those that can pay. Statements of non-responsibility reinforce the gap of gender division between production and reproduction as they constantly delegate reproduction to the unpaid work of women or to the low paid work of women in the new economy. The problem of non-responsibility becomes bigger in the context of globalisation where the above mentioned gendered elements are easy to expand. Acker (2006) defines non-responsibility as:

Refusal or attempts to avoid contributions to meeting the needs of people, if these contributions do not directly enhance production or accumulation [...] Non-responsibility includes practices that deny workers living conditions, reasonable hours, and job benefits, and refusal to support more general community welfare. It includes resistance to affirmative action and pay equity, as well as refusal to support the provision of day care and paid leave for family responsibilities (p.94).

The non-responsibility of capitalism has a negative impact on women and men, but the effects are differentiated along gendered and racialised class processes. The claim to non-responsibility contributes to devaluation and marginalisation of reproductive activities i.e. caring and domestic work as well as those responsible to perform these tasks, mainly women.

The work of women is a reserve for capital. Gender, along with immigration, constantly provides a reserve for employers in developed countries. Sassen (1998) argues that gender is predominantly a reserve for the providing of multiple maintenance services that makes possible the presence or the functioning of the transnational business centres in “global cities”. In global cities, mostly immigrant women, and especially women from developing and third countries, are those that provide services i.e. cleaning offices, doing domestic work, caring for children, the elderly and the disabled. When this work is provided by immigrant women, global managers and other members of the global elite can easily perform their professional jobs.

Another consequence of global capitalism is the work insecurity, or precarity, as it will be explained below.

2.3. The concept of precarity

The concept of precarity refers to instability and insecurity of work and economy, lack of protection, and social vulnerability (Rodgers 1989; Vosko 2010; Thornley 2010; Appay 2010; Fudge & Owens 2006). It allows us to understand how the labour market position is connected with other policy aspects as well as the experiences of everyday life (Neilson & Rossiter 2008).

The exploitation of workforce happens beyond the boundaries of work, it is distributed across the whole time and space of life. Precarity means not simply exploiting the workforce but exploiting the continuum of everyday life (Tsianos & Papadopoulos 2006).

Precarity is a life situation that is on the increase, characterised by unfavourable working conditions, insecurity, material deficits and lack of recognition. It is said that precarity, in particular, limits the opportunities for people to make future plans (Dörre 2006; Vosko 2010).

Depending on the age, type of household, sex, qualifications, region and nationality, employment insecurity is dealt with in very different ways. The younger and better qualified the employees are, the greater the hope of finding permanent employment (Dörre 2006). Employment insecurity becomes the natural fate of those who do not have high qualifications in the new economy (Fudge & Owens 2006 p.38).

Even though there may be some groups that enjoy having the status of flexible employment because they have good financial resources, there are other groups that are found in precarious positions. For the latter group the concept of flexibilisation means “flexploitation” (Dörre 2006).

There are several dimensions to precariousness: firstly, work stability; the degree of continuity. The precarious jobs are those jobs where the risk of job loss is high or with a short job prospect. In this category irregular work may also be included as long as there is uncertainty on the ongoing accessibility of the work. Also, the less the worker controls working conditions like wages, the pace of work etc, the more insecure the work becomes. In addition, if low income jobs are coupled with insecure social relations and poverty, this combination may also be regarded as precarious.

Precarisation affects the groups that have not been included in the formal labour market, such as women and immigrants (Thornley 2010 p.2). Much of this work is carried out, now progressively, by migrant workers whether fully or partially documented. Precariousness increasingly defines the conditions under which people work in all different sectors of activity, and yet it is not only work, but also living conditions, that have become precarious for more and more extensive portions of the population of progressive societies (Appay 2010 p.34).

The increases on the precarious work in the context of the decline of the standard employment or in the context of economic restructuring, is the most fundamental problem of the new economy (Fudge & Owens 2006). Although precarious work is not a new phenomenon, it has become an important point of interest in the current discussion, given that it is apparently linked to globalisation and the new economy. In addition, they argue that precarious work continues to be closely linked to those groups that have constantly been lacking in influence and power in the labour market. Although precarious work has been spread throughout the labour market as a whole, those that are found in precarious working situations continue to be different racial and ethnic minorities, women, and disabled workers.

Precarious work mutually represents a wide-ranging problem in the new economy and points towards a continuing trend to an inferior status within the labour market. The persistence and proliferation of precarious work and the secondary status of those occupying such positions in the work force are not phenomena that can be attributed to the nature of investment, production, and exchange in the new economy alone. Rather, they are intimately linked to institutional structures in which work takes place and the choices states make about the structure of legal entitlements; the distribution of resources through taxations and income. Precarity is also caused by gender stereotype; by the conventional expectation that women should do unpaid care work namely at home whilst their counterparts (men) participate in the public sphere (Fudge & Owens 2006 p.13).

Feminist scholars have persevered in the argument regarding the relationship between production and reproduction, as a relationship of interdependence rather than a separated connection. The separation of the market (production) from home (reproduction) is a main characteristic of industrialised countries. Therefore,

understanding the ways that the market depends on social reproduction as an instant source of labour, and especially its impact on women, is very important.

Precarity is considered to be a consequence of multidimensional reorganisation of the production processes in post-Fordism; taking place mostly through deindustrialisation (the flexibilisation and neoliberalisation of labour market); feminisation of employment (the incorporation of reproduction work in the production process) and from the rise of immaterial labour or affective labour. However, in this thesis, the precarity concept is not considered only as an insecure and vulnerable situation in which people are found. In other words, precarity is not only seen as a concept that explains the present contradiction of production. But the concept of precarity is seen as a situation that empowers those that experience it, as argued by Waite (2009) “the experiences of precarity simultaneously create possible rallying points of resistance” (p.417).

In other words, Waite (2009) argues that the precarity has to be seen from both views: as an insecure situation, but also as a feasible uniting point of opposition among those that experience precarity. Similarly, Papadopoulos et. al. (2008) argues that precarity should not only be seen as a condition, or as an insecure situation created by global capitalism in post-Fordism only, but also as a way of conjuring up different modes of experiencing and mobilising alternative forms of action. Papadopoulos et. al. (2008) argues, for example, that the autonomy the worker has in post-Fordism must be emphasised and looked at carefully. He presents the case of Zora (an immigrant women working in Germany): if we see Zora’s account just from the perspective of contemporary relations of production, we will only see specific forms of exploitation. That is, discrimination based on gender and race in the context of global capitalism. He says that we must also see that Zora is able to take action.

For example, she can leave her job whenever she wants. If she feels that she cannot work anymore with a certain employer, she can leave him or her easily. Zora can leave the job as she does not have a written contract that must be followed or obeyed. This means that the worker is free to take action on his/her behalf. These actions, then, even though they are sometimes small, are seen as acts of resistance towards macrostructures. Below I will apply the concept of precarity in the context of Albanian immigrant women.

2.4. The application of the concept of precarity

Despite the use of other concepts that show the consequences of macrostructures like global capitalism, gender and race, I have also chosen to use the concept of precarity in this thesis in order to show the acts of resistance taken by these women to resist macrostructures.

Using only global capitalism and the concepts of gender, race and class does not fully explain the everyday life of these women. Applying the above mentioned concepts in this thesis represents Albanian migrant women as victims of economic, political and social structures only.

These concepts cannot explain the efforts that these women have made to change their situations caused by macro-structures. But the concept of precarity makes it possible to account for the resistance that the women have made against the macro-structures.

Using this concept, we can not only explain the consequences of neoliberal policies, like for example the transition of Albania from a top down commanded economy to a free market economy, which consequently resulted in unemployment of Albanians. But, we can also explain the acts taken by these women with regard to the change of their precarious situations. It is important to look at the actions for a change taken by these women. As Mulinari emphasised (in Sager 2011), we should be careful and not to present women as victims of social structures but to look at their efforts too, the efforts to change their life situation even though the efforts might be little. That is, to pay attention to the human agency. Also, as Papadopoulos et. al. (2008) content:

we look for social change in seemingly insignificant occurrences of life: refusing to subscribe to a clichéd account of one's life story; sustaining the capacity to work in insecure and highly precarious conditions by developing informal social networks on which one can rely; or living as an illegal migrant below the radar of surveillance. These everyday experience are commonly rejected in accounts in social and political transformation [.....]Such imperceptible moments of social life are the starting point of contemporary forces of change (pp. xii-xiii).

Similarly, Waite (2009) argues:

referring to life worlds characterized by uncertainty and insecurity, the term precarity is double-edged as it implies both a condition and a possible rallying point for resistance (p.1).

The concept of precarity in this thesis is seen as double-edged, as it indicates both, a condition caused by neoliberal market policies and as a potential uniting point of resistance among those that experience precarity.

Accordingly, I will look at the everyday life of Albanian migrant women by paying attention not only to the difficulties and insecurities faced by these women, but I will also pay attention to the efforts undertaken by these women in changing their situation caused by macrostructures. For example, as Parreñas (2001) argues about Philippine migrant women: Philippine migrant women resisted macrostructures (global capitalism and patriarchy) that have caused very low payment in the Philippines, by migrating to other countries in order to earn higher salaries. It is thus interesting to explore Albanian undocumented migrant women from both these perspectives. To see their situation as a condition caused by neoliberal policies and as emancipatory point i.e. the efforts undertaken by these women to resist the structures.

The contact that I have had with these women during my field-work has served as an opportunity to inform them and enlighten them to a greater extent about the living and working conditions they are in. By doing so, it inspired these women to organise themselves, to work more through their social connections, and to make themselves heard. In the next chapter I will present the methodology used in this study.

3. Research Methodology

This research uses a qualitative method to grasp the reality of the situation facing undocumented migrant women working and living in Greece.

The relationship between theory and research is an inductive one, where the theory is generated from the data (Bryman 2008 p.366). This means, that after I collected the data in Greece I was only then able to construct the theory. Actually, the theory construction has been an on-going process while I have been conducting my analysis hopefully culminating in the best theory possible that can explain the data. Even though I had a theoretical background in my mind when I went to do my research, the actual theoretical framework was only consolidated after the data was collected.

The epistemological position of this research is interpretive where I am to understand the social world through the eyes of research participants (Bryman 2008 p.366). My role is to understand undocumented migrant women in Greece through an examination and interpretation of what, and how, they say and interpret their situation as undocumented migrant women in the informal sector in Greece.

3.1. Interviews

Interviews are the fundamental basis upon which this study is built. According to May (1997) “Interviews yield rich insights into people’s biographies, experiences, opinions, values, aspirations, attitudes and feelings” (p.120). Conversations with Albanian women about their situation as undocumented immigrants, as well as the interpretation of these conversations, make up the fundamentals of interviewing. Kvale & Brinkmann (2009) argue that if you want to explore how people comprehend their world and life, go and talk to them.

Dialogue is a fundamental way in which people communicate. Through dialogue people get to know each-other by interacting, posing and answering questions regarding their feelings, experiences, thoughts etc. In these interviews, I asked questions, listened to the interviewees and tried to understand the interviewees’ point of view of the world, or how the interviewees understand and experience their situation as an undocumented in Greece. I tried to understand and explore the world views, experiences and thoughts of the interviewees as they understand it,

rather than through my scientific explanation about what it is to be an undocumented immigrant (p.1). On the one hand, the rapport between myself and the interviewees was not an equal relationship as I was the one who defined and controlled the process. I set the topic of the interview and listened intently to the answers allowing them to fully express their opinions and experiences. But on the other hand, based on the feminist point of view regarding the relationship between the researcher and the subject of the study, I was as an equal; able to identify myself with someone of the same gender and having been in the same predicament in the past. The type of interview that I implemented in this research is the semi-structured one.

3.1.1. Semi-structured interview

In a semi-structured interview the purpose is to describe the point of view of the interviewees. That is, to interpret how these women experience the situation as undocumented immigrants in Greece. Given that a semi-structured interview is neither an open spontaneous everyday conversation nor a closed questionnaire, I followed an interview guide that I had prepared in advance regarding these women and their situation as undocumented immigrants. However, at the same time, some free communicational space was left for the interviewee in order that these women could express themselves freely. As I will later divulge in the findings section of the thesis, at times new information was communicated to me during this form of interviewing, challenging my pre-understanding regarding this issue.

When Flick (2009) writes about semi-structured interviews, he relies on the term ‘subjective theory’, meaning that the interviewees have a compound store of knowledge about the topic the researcher is interested in. Applying this concept to my thesis, I directed open questions which the interviewees answered spontaneously, sharing their ‘subjective theory’ or knowledge of their experiences of what it means to be an undocumented immigrant in Greece (Flick 2009 p.156).

3.2. The process of data collection

When I decided to write about Albanian immigrant women in Greece, I was faced with the issue of how to write about this group more specifically. Actually, deep

in my heart, I wanted to write about undocumented migration. Why did I have this desire? Apart from coming from Albania, which, since the 1990's, has experienced undocumented migration in higher proportions than other European countries (King 2005), my father, my extended family and I, have experienced illegal migration firsthand.

In the process of studying gender and migration issues in different courses in the master's programme in Lund University, I have gleaned that Albanian migrant women in Greece, nowadays, are experiencing discrimination as a result of gender, race and class and their legal status as dependent on the male-breadwinner (dependent on the legal status of their husbands). But regarding undocumented immigrant women and especially Albanian undocumented women in Greece was not researched enough.

The next issue I faced was how to contact these undocumented immigrants. Through Facebook I managed to connect with a friend I had known years ago who I hoped would be able to give me an idea of the current situation facing immigrant Albanian women, as she herself was one of them.

She was not able to help me directly (as at the time I asked her she had returned to Albania), but introduced me to another woman that lives in Athens, Greece. She gave me her name and I immediately searched for her on Facebook, sending her a friend request. After we became Facebook friends, I wrote to her explaining who I was, what I was intending to do, and asked her if she was available to help me by being my informant.

She agreed immediately, and later we talked on Skype to explain more about the aim of this research and what this work will contribute to. As we were talking on Skype, I asked her different questions, trying to explore the general situation of these women in Greece. Among other questions, I asked her if, in Greece, there are undocumented Albanian immigrant women. She told me that, or putting it in her words: "like the fish are in the sea at the same way are undocumented immigrant women here in Greece" (informant); enough said! She explained to me that generally the husband has documents and does not live in fear of deportation, but the women do not have them. This is due largely to the fact that the husband has not been able to pay all the social security schemes and to fulfil all the requirements of the immigration law in the family reunion to require the necessary

documents to cover his family. She assured me that she can find lots of undocumented Albanian immigrant women.

This study has been carried out in Athens, the capital city of Greece which I assumed would have more Albanian immigrants than any other city in Greece, thus giving me greater likelihood of success in finding interviewees for my study than doing the study in a smaller city. Since this is a qualitative study and not a quantitative one, I do not claim to generalize my findings to all immigrant women although it seems reasonable to believe that some themes found here are significant to immigrant women in general (Lincoln and Guba 1985 in Flick 2009 p.407).

I should make it clear for the reader that even though my informant came with me everywhere, when I interviewed my interviewees, she was not taking part at all. While I was interviewing the women she stayed with the other family members in another room. We used public transport (bus) to meet my interviewees. The interviews were mostly conducted in the interviewee's homes, which I considered to be a good environment so that the interviewees were freer to express their feeling and thoughts about their situation as undocumented immigrants rather than being in another place like in the employers' house for example.

The selection criteria for my interviewees was that all these women had to be undocumented. Also, the second criteria was that these women had to be working as domestic worker, as a cleaner, babysitter, taking care of the elderly and the disabled. To a certain degree, my sampling was also included women accompanied by their husbands. However, I did not consider only this category but also women who were on their own. I interviewed 8 women that were accompanied by their husbands and 3 women that had migrated independently.

Of those that had migrated independently one of them was a single-unmarried woman around 28 years old, the second was a divorced woman in her mid-thirties, and the third woman was a 48-year old widow.

Out of the 11 women interviewed, three of them did not want to be interviewed in their own homes. One was interviewed at her brother's house as she did not want her husband to be involved in the interview. The second woman was interviewed in my informant's house as she was working as a live-in domestic worker which meant, of course, that she lived at her employers place and did not have her own space. She wanted to feel secure and comfortable telling me about her experiences

as an undocumented immigrant in private. The last woman was interviewed at a café as she was also living and working at her employer's house and preferred the security of a neutral place.

Three immigrant Albanian women, who are leaders of Albanian associations in Athens, were also interviewed with the aim of discovering if Albanian migrant women, and especially undocumented ones, receive any services or help from the state. Interviewing undocumented immigrants is a sensitive issue. I therefore pondered on the ethical aspect before going to the field work.

3.3. Ethical consideration

In every research ethical considerations are a 'must'. Flick (2009) gives the reader advice regarding ethical issues:

Research ethics is an important issue in planning and doing you research. It is often not possible to find easy and very general solutions to the problems and dilemmas. It has a lot to do with reflections and sensitiveness. Thinking about ethical dilemmas, however, should not prevent you from doing your research, but should help you to do it in a more reflective way and take your participant's perspective on a different level. Try to consider the participant's role and think from their perspective how would it be for you to do what you expect them to do in your research (p.43).

Following Flick's recommendation, I reflected on ethical aspects of my research, especially given the fact that I was studying undocumented immigrants. When researching undocumented migration ethical risks can be seen as both social risks and psychological/physical stress (Düvell et. al. 2010 p.229). These risks are increased when researching vulnerable groups about sensitive topics (ibid). Thus, understandable information regarding the purpose of the research and keeping the confidentiality of their information has been important to avoid the social and psychological risks as above-mentioned. (Bryman 2008 p.118; Flick 2009 p.37)

Accordingly, I explained the purpose of the study to all my interviewees which was to give to these women a voice and also that it was for my own purposes i.e. my master's thesis. It is very important to note that these women understood that they participated in an interview, not only for the sake of the researcher, but also for their own benefit, as Flick (2009) argues that they can be given the opportunity to express and raise their voices as undocumented immigrants.

The interviewees were asked if they were willing to share their experiences and if they approved of being recorded. They were assured about confidentiality as I communicated that their names would be changed. They were told that they could leave the interview at any time if they did not want to continue (Flick 2009). I followed the ethical code from the research community; to avoid causing any harm to the interviewees (Flick 2009 p.37). All my interviewees agreed to be recorded. I think the women were convinced about the purpose of the study.

A digital recorder was used, and at times some important field notes were taken using a pen and a notebook. The interviews were conducted in Albanian (the researcher's mother tongue). Each interview lasted approximately one hour. The method of interviewing was a semi-structured interview. The interviews were translated and transcribed afterwards. There was an avoidance of those parts of the interview that were not connected to my research question due to time constraints. Similarly, I only transcribed that which was relevant to my research question (Flick 2009 p.300).

3.4. Limitations of the study

Being an insider, having been myself in that situation it has helped me understand better the situation of these women than for example another researcher that has not been at the same situation. My position as a researcher correlates with Haraway (1988) theory when she argues about the science production in her article of situated knowledge:

Feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object. It allows us to become answerable for what we learn how to see (p.583).

My interviewees and I cannot be divided in two different 'pieces'. As abovementioned, there are many elements that puts these women and me at the same location or situation, and consequently make me understand them better; it allows me to give a better account for them.

However, even though being an insider helps that researcher understand the interviewees better it might also happen that the researcher might be biased. For example, because I have suffered myself from the undocumented migrant status

and have been chased by police often, I might also expect that those women have experienced the same. Being found in this situation, in order to be as much objective as possible, I have applied the concept of reflexivity which means awareness of one's specific social position (Sümer 2009 p.13). I must emphasize that I was not only an insider: being Albanian and having the same experience as these women some years ago. However, I was also an outsider. Because of my education achievements I was an outsider for these women. So they did not feel the same with me when it comes to education and the social position. Being an outsider, therefore, means less explanatory opportunities from the inside, but more space for a critical attitude (Flick 2006 p.119-120). Having a different social status of those women has helped me to see the problem from a critical approach. I think that the aim of this study has been achieved. In other words, the limitations of this study do not impact the trustworthiness and the validity of this study concerning the main question. However there are some limitations that might have impacted the study as obviously happens with any research and especially with inexperienced researchers (Bui 2009). I think in order to have taken more in depth responses from my interviewees, I should perhaps have allowed more time. For example, one woman wanted to talk a lot about how she felt living 24 hours a day at her employer's house. But we had run out of time and I was forced to cut her off (Bui 2009 p.198).

There were other factors that negatively impacted the interviewing process. Some women were interrupted by their children several times even though the husband tried to be with the children while the women was being interviewed.

Also, when they gave me new information, I should have kept the dialogue going in order to receive even more. Furthermore, it would probably have been better if I had contacted some of the lawyers who were managing the documentation process and interviewed them as well. However, I would say that since interviewing the lawyers was not the aim of my research it might be a good suggestion for future research. Finally, as it has been mentioned, I interviewed dependent women (living with their families in Greece) as well as independent women (living alone in Greece). But, I feel that the situation of independent women need to be explored in more depth given the fact that I only interviewed very few of them. So, I suggest that future research focus on Albanian migrant women who live in Greece independently.

4. Analysis

To analyse the following stories, I have used a traditional way of working with qualitative data. After collecting the data and transcribing them, I have gone through the data several times. Then, I have structured the material thematically around the codes and themes that I have found to reappear in the conversation with the interviewees along with the concepts stemming from the theoretical framework. The analysis is found upon the understanding and experiences mirrored in the interviewees' conversations and their choices as to where to put importance or emphasis in their answers to open questions asked by me. These stories are interpreted from a feminist perspective.

4.1. The women's stories

I will start by briefly presenting the women's stories. The focus is on the main points of these stories.

Drita

Drita, 27 years old, with a primary education (8 years) lives and works in Greece together with her husband and her son. In 1997 she could not attend high school as young girls at that time could be kidnapped and sent abroad in prostitution. Albania at that time was in civil and political disorder because so many Albanians had lost their money in pyramid schemes (Jarvis 1999). Drita was unemployed in Albania and therefore migrated to Greece, via the mountains, for the purpose of finding work. In Greece she found work mainly in domestic services. Currently, Drita is out of work. Her son has not been accepted into kindergarten and she has experienced racism to a certain degree. Drita has started the process of acquiring documents but she has not yet succeeded. She feels very disappointed with the job that her lawyers are doing. Her hope is to acquire documents and to be able to find work other than a cleaner.

Albana

30-year old Albana, has a primary school education. In Albania, she worked mainly in agricultural seasonal jobs. Her payment was very low and the work was only during certain times of the year. Therefore, Albana migrated to Greece,

undocumented, in the search of a job. Like Drita, Albana worked in domestic services. Albana lives in Athens with her very young children and her unemployed husband. Presently, she does not have a steady job at all; she feels very worried about that. She has also experienced racism. Albana has encountered problems in acquiring documents and has not succeed yet in this matter. Her future plans are blurred and darkened by the current lack of jobs in Greece, but Albana still dreams that something good will happen, like acquiring documents, for example.

Mimoza

Mimoza, 53, with primary education, worked in Albania for an international tobacco firm but was paid very low wages and worked in unacceptable conditions. She fled to Greece in search of a better paid job and better working conditions. Mimoza has lived with her husband in Greece for the last 10 years. She continues to work as a live-in domestic worker. She has experienced severe racism. Being undocumented has impacted heavily on her relationship with her employer who controls and manipulates Mimoza. On one occasion for example, her employer sent her to the doctor and then demanded that she worked twice as many hours as a form of repayment. Her hope is to earn sufficient money to one day return to Albania and build her own home.

Alma

Alma is a 54-year old woman who has twice entered Greece by crossing the border undocumented. The last time she succeeded was via Corfu in a boat. After the communist regime fell Alma was left without work. She worked in the home without payment. In Athens Alma managed to find work in domestic services but lost her job as a result of the economic crises. She is currently unemployed and very worried about her chances of finding another job. She is also in the process of acquiring documents but has encountered difficulties. Alma has not felt accepted by her the Greek community and feels isolated even though she lives with her children and her husband. She longs to have documentation so that she is free to search for work and assert her rights. Alma hopes one day she will build the house of her dreams in Albania.

Donika

Donika is 44. She left Albania for Greece, in search of work, with her 12-year old son leaving her daughter, who is studying to be a nurse, behind. Her husband was already in Greece and acquired the papers but was not able to bring his family through the family reunification strategy because he did not have a stable job. So Donika was forced to travel undocumented and even borrowed money to pay the smugglers. Donika has worked in domestic services. Breaking the gender stereotypes, the last time she worked, Donika left her family to work as live-in domestic worker. But she is presently unemployed. She has experienced severe working conditions due to racism, her undocumented status, and her gender. She has been unable to start not the process of documentation because of a lack of money. Her hope is to build a house in Albania but she doubts this dream will come true because of the unemployment problem.

Enkelejda

Enkelejda is a 32-year old woman with a secondary education who migrated to Greece without documents. She did not have a paid job in Albania and was living with her in-laws. She was still forced to work hard in the fields and in the home but without earning money. Enkelejda expresses her worries and insecurities about not having a steady job. She is also unhappy about the racism she has to put up with. She has not been treated fairly by lawyers. Twice she has paid them money to acquire documents for her but they did not win the case and refused to discuss the matter changing their phone numbers so that she could not contact them. Her first priority is to acquire documents (she is currently undergoing a third attempt) in order to easily find a job and to be treated with dignity as a human being. Secondly, she wishes to build a house in Albania.

Entela

Entela is a 54 year old married woman who crossed the borders undocumented to Greece in the search of work. She has worked in the past, and still works, as a live-out domestic worker but her wage is very low. She says that domestic work is very isolated and highly devalued. Regarding the relationship with her employer, she experiences it like being a slave. Entela has not yet succeeded in acquiring documents. She also feels that the lawyers are not working honestly. Her hope is

to acquire documents in order to be treated fairly. Also, her wish is that the state should do something, to make sure the employers treat the domestic workers with dignity.

Pranvera

50-year old Pranvera is a married woman who entered Greece with a false passport and visa. She describes how she felt the moment she passed the customs house. Pranvera felt extremely scared and anxious for fear of being discovered by the border police. She has generally worked as a live-out domestic worker, but right now, in the context of the economic crisis and consequently not enough jobs in Greece, she is working as a live-in domestic worker even though she has a family with her in Athens. This is an unusual situation for an Albanian household, as it would not normally be accepted for a woman to live and work away from her family according to Albanian attitudes. She has experienced racism to a high degree, especially related to her religion. Her working conditions are very difficult as she has worked longer hours than agreed, and the work load is higher than agreed upon. Her hope is to acquire documents.

Vera

Vera, a single woman of 28, entered Greece without documents, through the mountains, to find work and a better life. She works as a cleaner. She has not had been paid her salary for three months. Her employer does not pay her blaming the lack of money on the economic crisis and still expects Vera to continue working. Vera has also worked longer hours than agreed upon. When she tried to ask about her rights, her employer threatened to call the police for deportation. Vera also has a dream, that if she could one day get married, she would be able to get the necessary documents. The immigration law, according to Vera, states that people who get married in Greece, whether to an Albanian or a Greek, are eligible for documentation.

Jeta

Jeta, a 43-year old widow with three daughters to support, worked in Albania for very low pay doing seasonal agricultural jobs in her village. But she could not provide enough for her family and so migrated to Greece in a search of well-paid

work. She has worked as a live-in domestic worker but became seriously ill because of horrendous working conditions. She remained unemployed for two months but now she works as a live-out domestic worker caring for two old people. She has experienced racism and she is worried about the unemployment problem in Greece. Jeta hopes to acquire documents even though she has not started any procedure yet as she does not have the money to begin the process of documentation. Her main wish, beyond all wishes, is to be able to financially support her three daughters who are studying in Albania and whom she misses a lot.

Dallendyshja

Dallendyshja is a divorced woman of 28 years who tried to enter Greece for the purpose of work a few times undocumented and finally she succeeded to enter Greece through Corfu. She is working as a domestic live-in worker and her working conditions are very difficult. She feels very isolated and not valued at all for what she does. She feels like her employer treats her like a slave. Dallendyshja has not started the process of acquiring documentation. Her employer discouraged her, telling her that the lawyers will just take her money without fixing the papers. He assured her that if the police catch her, he will get her out of prison. She has also experienced racism. Her hope is to buy a small apartment in Albania as well as to become a cook. Dallendyshja dreams about a better future with governmental interventions regarding domestic workers' rights. She pointed out that domestic workers must be treated with dignity and respect.

4.2. Leaving Albania

4.2.1. No future in Albania

Looking carefully at all the dialogues from my interviewees, I could notice that they did not see any future in Albania. They all emphasised the unemployment problem. While most of them did not have a paid job at all, a few of them had one, but very low paid and in difficult working conditions. Out of eleven interviewees, only three of my interviewees had work in paid employment. The other nine interviewees said that they did domestic work in the house as well as

working outside in the fields or in agriculture. So, these nine interviewees did work, but without a wage as they worked for their own families.

As expressed by an interviewee when I asked about the employment aspect in Albania, “I did not have a paid job in Albania where I could take money from. I of course have worked in my fields with my mom but I did not have a paid job” (Albana).”

Similarly, another interviewee said, “I did not have a job at all in Albania. I did only house work. All the time I was at home. (Enkelejda).”

Another woman stated:

Before the communist system came down I have worked in a farm where I got a fairly good wage. But, when democracy came, I have worked only at my home. Doing domestic services without earning any money” (Entela).

Looking at the above-mentioned statements, it can clearly be seen that these women did not have paid jobs in Albania. Entela, who is quite older than the rest of other interviewees, links the changes in ideological and governmental systems to her work-life situation.

The other three women stated that they have had a paid job but the payment was very low and they had difficult working conditions.

As expressed by one my interviewee:

I have worked in a Greek tobacco firm in Albania for some time. But the payment was very low compared to the amount of job I did, and the working conditions were horrendous. I just could not work there anymore. I decided to migrate; to come to Greece as the payment is much better” (Mimoza).

In Mimoza’s statement, the theory of Sassen (1998) about the global capitalism that uses poor countries and poor people to make a profit seems valid. Sassen argues that firms arrange their work in the poor countries in order to use the work force with minimal payment and very difficult working conditions. In this case, people do not migrate to the global cities, but it is the Firm that comes to the poor country (Albania) and employs poor people under difficult working conditions and with a very low payment.

Another woman stated:

I have worked as a teacher for 24 years. This job in the communist time was a very good job and well paid. But now, even though it might be a good job still, the payment is very low. I decided to migrate to Greece only because of economical reason. I heard that I can earn good money compared to what I earned working as a teacher. I wanted to have a better life (Pranvera).

In the statement above, even though the case might be slightly different from the previous one, what they have in common is that for both of them, the reason of they decided to migrate was an economic one. That is, the search of a better paid jobs and consequently a better life.

Another woman stated:

I have worked in the village, on the others villager's land for about 5 or 6 years. I could mostly work in seasonal jobs, for example, in the harvest time. But the payment was very low and difficult working conditions. I also worked in my land. My children were small. I could provide somehow for them. But, when my eldest daughter went to University, I was constrained to migrate to Greece because the money I earned working in the village was not enough. I felt so bad when my daughter finished the secondary school and I had no money to buy her a dress to participate in the celebration of the end of the school. My daughter has studied very well. She was very good at school and I, as a parent, could not provide for her the most basic things. Therefore, I had to migrate to Greece in order to provide for her. I do miss my daughters very much" (Jeta).

The explanation behind Jeta's statement is that all the opportunities that were once organised by the state, (the communist state) were cut, so that now it is left to the private entrepreneur. This highlights that fact that the capitalist system places the importance on individual responsibility rather than state responsibility (Perrons 2004). Women in this case try to find a job in any way they can. The private entrepreneur can manipulate with payment, poor treatment etc. according to his/her interest. The state is not a part of it. But as we can see, even though Jeta worked hard and in difficult working conditions she could not provide for her children, especially when they started to grow up. She migrated, therefore, to Greece to meet the children's financial needs.

Looking at the above statements, we can see that even though the cases might be different, for example, one women worked in the fields, another worked for a tobacco firm and yet another, worked as a teacher etc., the payment was very low

for each of them. The main reason why these women migrated is that they did not see any future in Albania regarding paid work. As one of my interviewees highlights, having a job in Albania did not give any hope for the future:

Only the idea that I will go to Greece and work; find a job and change my life gave me lots of strength and kept me going ahead while crossing the borders on foot, in snow, rain, falling on the thorns, passing the rivers and not using the bridge etc. The idea that if I turn back to Albania and will not have a job gave me strength to continue running ahead; running to Greece and not turning back (Drita).

It should also be mentioned that these women (the oldest women of all of my interviewees, as the youngest have not been of working age during the communist time) had jobs during the communist system, and were rather satisfied with the payment (as in the case of Entela and Pranvera). But, when the system of governance began to change in Albania from a centred economy to a free market economy, these women encountered job related problems. They all lost their jobs during the transition period, except Pranvera who was a teacher. But she maintained that working as a teacher paid very poorly. Therefore, migration was the solution to their unemployment problems.

This section of my findings is congruent with the findings done by other scholars about the employment of people from post-communist countries in general and that of Albanian women in particular, before and after the communist system came down in Albania.

Migration for the purpose of employment has been a survival strategy for Albanians since the fall of the communist system in the 1990's. With the fall of the commanded economy and with the transition towards an open market economy, Albanian citizens themselves, rather than the state, have had to make their way out of poverty. There were no jobs, either for women or for men, and unemployment, therefore, became a huge problem for the country. Being subjected to such circumstances, Albanians migrated in search of work. They migrated, primarily, to neighbouring countries; that is, Italy and Greece.

Although some women left Albania together with their husbands and fathers, generally speaking, Albanian men were the first to migrate. The women were left behind to take care of the family where they became isolated subjects;

concentrated in the private sphere namely home (Lazaridis 2000). This served to reinforce gender stereotypes.

It must be emphasised that Albania is considered by anthropologists as a strong male-dominated society where women become part of their husbands' upon marriage and all the birthright follows the male line (Vullnetari 2009 p.3).

Women who had paid jobs during communist regime, generally sent their children to crèches etc. as women's emancipation was a key aim of the communist government, even though the roots of Patriarchy were not completely taken off, but with the change of the governmental system, women were constrained to stay at home doing domestic work. Women were the group that was most affected by personal insecurity and a lack of economic opportunities. Their emancipation, i.e. the participation of women in the labour market and in politics etc., was connected with the communist past and was thus stigmatised, and as a consequence, rejected (Vullnetari 2009 p.5).

The position of women in the private sphere was viewed by Albanian society as a phenomenon that is normal and natural. The substitute social orders that emerged were powerfully based on the re-invention of tradition and the regeneration of patriarchy.

Even if we look at the statistics analysed by other scholars and organisations, we see that female participation in the labour market has decreased, when comparing how it was during the communist government with the government that has prioritized free-market ideology, which is now in power. Female participation in the labour market dropped by nearly half, from 78% in 1989 to 46% in 2005 (Kolpeja et. al. 2006 p.10).

Also, we can see that the difference in the participation in the labour market between men and women has increased. According to administrative data from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in 2004, the labour force participation rate for men was 68.6 % compared to 46.6 % for women (Ekonomi et. al. 2006 pp.43-44). Thus, we can see that the percentage of men's participation in labour market is higher than that of women.

As argued by Sassen (1998) economic restructuring in the context of globalisation has impacted the employment of women in both receiving and sending countries (Sassen 1998). Economic restructuring or the transition from the manufacturing to the service economy has caused people to migrate. The implementation of

capitalism as an economic and social system, which is a globalised phenomenon, has impacted the employment of women. Capitalism is enhanced through neo-liberal policies which believe that development and modernisation is enhanced by the free market (Perrons 2004).

The change of the government system from the collective responsibility, toward individual responsibility, has made people look for other opportunities, like migrating to more developed countries, even without documents. The lack of jobs in sending countries and particularly in post-communist countries has forced people to migrate (Acker 2004 p.5). Women from developing countries surrounded by macro-economic structures leave their countries in the search for work. Global capitalism, as a system of accumulation through its neo-liberal policies, is interested in production and does not pay proper attention to reproduction. Consequently, women, who have this role assigned by society, perform the duties expected of them. (Acker 2006; Anderson 2000; Sassen 1998). The Capitalism system, through its neoliberal policies, reinforces gender division by highlighting the different roles of women and men assigned by society.

This theory seems valid in the Albanian case. As mentioned elsewhere, Albania has begun to experience the process of economic restructuring since the year 1990. This country has experienced the transition from a commanded economy to an open free market economy. This transition is associated with many issues in general and with the unemployment problem in particular. While Albanian men migrated first as a reaction towards capitalist macro-economic structural, Albanian women were forced to concentrate on being in the home, doing domestic work; doing unpaid work. It can clearly be seen that free market ideologies in Albania, implemented after the communist system came down, have reinforced gender division by allocating women to the private sphere, doing unpaid domestic work.

A man is expected to participate in the public sphere and to fulfil his role as a bread-winner, while women are expected by society to concentrate on the private sphere, doing domestic work, taking care of children, the elderly and disabled. Men generally migrated abroad, primarily to Italy and Greece, while women concentrated in the private sphere, namely, at home.

In summation, since the beginning of the transition from a commanded economy to a free market economy Albanian women have been constrained to the private

sphere i.e. doing domestic work and consequently reinforcing the gender division which allocates women and men to different positions in society. That is, men in the public sphere, reinforcing the role of men as breadwinners and women in the private sphere, reinforcing the role of women as “naturally” given to take care of others and to do domestic services. Almost all my interviewees did not have a paid job. They worked, rather at home, doing unpaid work. The remaining interviewees had managed to find a job but with a low payment and difficult working conditions. The causes of this situation are likely to be found in the changes of economic and political system in Albania which started at 1990s. That is, the change from a commanded economy organised by a top-down approach to an open free market economy.

The main aim of this section has been to illustrate, from the perspective of these women, that they had not future in Albania regarding employment. They were, therefore, looking for other opportunities to avoid this situation; as the following subsection shows.

4.2.2. Promises of work in a new country

Almost all my interviewees said that they have heard from their husbands, relatives and other immigrants that came back to Albania, that a female immigrant in Greece can find work even easier than a man. This is because there are many available jobs in domestic services. Also, a women working in cleaning and domestic services in Greece can earn much better money than in Albania. Even though the job is a devalued job and low paid.

For example, Pranvera, who has been working as a teacher for 24 years in Albania said:

I decided to migrate to Greece only because of economical reason. I heard from other villagers that came back to Albania, and mostly from my husband who has been from the first people from the village to migrate, that I can earn good money compared to what I earned working as a teacher. Also, being a woman I will always find work as Greek families need somebody to clean their houses; to take care of their children; elderly or disabled (Pranvera).

My interviewees often heard through the social networks, that there exists a demand for domestic services in Greece. By hearing this, Albanian women are

attracted to the idea of migrating to Greece even when working conditions are known to be difficult. Even though Pranvera, knew that the work she would be doing in Greece would not be the same as the job she did in Albania (as she was a teacher in Albania) she decided to migrate. Actually, she saw migration as a way that she can have a better life.

Also another interviewee said:

In Greece it is easy for women to find jobs as they work in domestic services. Actually, right now women are working more than men, as jobs, especially for men, have disappeared. For example, my brother and his family is in a very difficult situation. His wife works but it is not enough. Right now my husband has been constrained to go back in Albania as my employer that I work as a domestic live-in did not allow him to stay with me. Therefore, my husband could not afford to rent a house in Athens and to pay by himself. So, he went back to Albania. I miss him a lot (Mimoza).

It seems to be easier for women to find jobs than for men. This is because they work in domestic services; a profession abandoned by local women. The demand for domestic workers in Greece can be explained by looking at some of the following factors.

In the context of welfare reduction, an ageing population, and gender stereotypes regarding the role of men and women in the Greek family, Greek women hire migrant women to perform domestic services as well as caring for the home, in order to participate in the formal labour market (Lazaridis 2000).

Also, the informal economy in Greece, which is the largest in Europe, has facilitated the employment of immigrants in general and in particular undocumented immigrants (Ibid).

As argued by Bradley & Helay (2008), one trend that has emerged since the 1950s, especially in the developed countries, has been the increased participation of women in the formal labour market. In this case, Greek women have been able to participate in the formal labour market. They have been able to change their position in society. However, they are not encouraged, neither by the state (for example by implementing women friendly policies like Scandinavian countries) nor by their husbands, to share childcare responsibilities and house work. The best

solution for Greek women wanting to take part in the formal labour market, is to hire migrant women.

Feminisation of employment is linked to broader changes in economic capitalist societies, namely, the move from manufacturing to services. Women, in contrast to men, are seen as naturally equipped to work in services that have elements of care.

Sassen (1998) and Anderson (2000) argue that in order for global capitalism to function, it must make sure that the needs of high professionals working in the formal labour market, are met. In order for production to function, and global capitalism to make a profit, it is required that professionals in highly privileged occupations successfully manage reproduction issues (that is, in cleaning their homes, cooking, taking care of children, taking care of the elderly and the disabled). In this respect, women from developed countries are able to participate in the formal labour market at the expense of immigrant women.

4.2.3. The journey

As we have seen in the previous section, the aim of the women that were interviewed in this study was to enter Greece, find a job, and change their way of living. All the interviewees crossed the borders undocumented. Almost all of them borrowed money in order to pay smugglers (people that promised them access to Greece for a sum of money). These women suffered while crossing the borders on foot, during the night hours, through the snow and the rain, etc. They experienced a high degree of fear and anxiety throughout their hazardous and difficult journeys. On top of that, they were force to pay large sums of money to the smugglers.

As expressed by one of my interviewees when I asked her how she came to Greece:

I have suffered a lot. When we were just passing the border by foot, a car stopped by. I paid 700 Euros. But, as soon as we got in the car, another car reported us to the police. The police car came very quick and made a sign to our car, to stop. But, our car run away very fast. The police car shot into the air in order that our car can stop, but still our car did not stop. We disappeared very quickly in a mountain. We got off from the car very quick and we started running very fast. Our car disappeared. We were left in the mountain. We run very fast, we run all the time. We were so afraid

that the police will catch us. While we were running very fast, the old lady fall down and broke her leg and nobody stayed with her. I felt so sorry. I could not stay with her. It was painful to leave her in that horrible situation. But I could not stay. The police could catch me. The police caught the old lady. I could see them from distance. I was so sorry. We continued running and when we were very far away from the police, we stopped and waited for another car to pick us up, to Janina. I was very traumatised; tired; hungry. I did not eat or drink anything. Even when we arrived in Janina I could not eat or drink anything. I was terrified (Enkelejda).

Even though the women in this study paid the smugglers large sums of money, they had terrifying experiences crossing the borders. It must also be stressed that Enkelejda was not accompanied by her husband as she crossed the border. Her husband was waiting for her in Athens. He had not fulfilled all the criteria required by the family reunification strategy (within immigration law) to enable him take his family with him to Greece. This is why Enkelejda migrated without documents.

My interviewees entered Greece in different ways. While most of them crossed the borders undocumented, travelling many hours on foot, two of them (Mimoza and Pranvera) stated that the smugglers have given them a false passport which enabled them to take public transport to their end destination. They passed the border controls pretending that they had documents, as taught by the smugglers.

As expressed by one of the interviewees:

You cannot imagine how I felt, how much pressure I felt; how much fear. Even in my dreams I have not had that situation. I got on the bus and asked people: do you have visa? Yes, they said. I truly did not know where I was going. The passport stated that I was 20 years old but in reality I was 40 years old. I felt extremely anxious - under so much pressure. Can you imagine, how much anxiety I had; the passport I was carrying did not contain my face or my age. Imagine, I was completely lost and I could not even listen to the bus driver when he was giving directions. Those that work in the customs house were all in-the-know; they had planned everything. The smugglers had corrupted the police at the border in advance. The police came into the bus, checked our passports, one by one. I had a completely fake passport but they did not say anything to me and just let me go (Pranvera).

We can see here that Pranvera experienced a high degree of fear and anxiety. It is also important to emphasise how the smugglers cooperated with the police in the customs house, or with the police border controllers. According to Pranvera, the police are corrupt. Apparently, the money paid by these women for their travel is shared between the smugglers and the border police. This means that the amount paid by these women was a lot. Here we can see the power of social networks; the power of agency.

It is important to emphasise that when immigrants act on their own behalf, like for example by opening an association which aims to protect their rights, it is a positive act of resistance to macro-structures. But when immigrants use their agency in order to exploit and make a profit from other immigrants we can see the negative side of agency.

In this case, however, we can see the power of agency used by these women to change their situation. Even though it is dangerous to cross the borders undocumented, the fact is that these women are resisting economical structures. These women are fighting to find jobs in order to change their economic situation. But we must emphasise that they are also changing social structures, such as gender relations. The women are neither travelling with their husbands nor following them through the family reunification strategy. They are fighting alone; crossing the borders just the same as the Albanian men did when they first entered Greece undocumented. This means that the women also succeeded in migrating without documents. In spite of the fact that entering Greece via smugglers is not the legal way, it is considered by the agency to be an acceptable solution for the resisting of the macro-structures enforced by neo-liberalism.

As expressed earlier in this thesis, these women cross the borders using different ways. But of course, always without documents.

Another woman stated:

I came by paying money. When I began the journey to Greece, I started from the Macedonian border. I was caught by the police. I was kept in prison for three days. But there were women and children. In the prison we had only water. They did not give us anything to eat. After three days I was deported to Albania. But I set up the journey again by paying the smugglers 180 Euros. I came from Saranda. We walked by foot and we had lots of fear. Because the smugglers told us: quick...quick, you will be caught by the police...quick. We travelled by speedboat, through the

water...we were so scared...so scared... because we were about to fall into the sea. Because, if the driver of the speedboat would see the water police, he would drive very fast, at the highest speed. He just wanted to disappear from the police. If we would fall into the sea, the boat driver would not stop to save us. He drove very fast. It was so scary. The driver did not talk to us at all. We discovered he was an Albanian but he never spoke to us. We were led by the other smugglers via mobile. They called us and lead us. I mean, for example they asked: Where are you? We are on the mountain. Can you see a tree? Yes. Go to the tree! Can you see the sea? Yes. Go to the seashore! Can you see a boat? Yes. Go to the boat! We travelled by boat. We went off from the boat in Corfu. They called us again and told us to go to the ship. We went there. Later they told us to buy the tickets. We went on the ferry and we travelled by ferry eight hours. We went to Patra. Then, we travelled from Patra to Athens. As soon as we arrived to Athens, they called us and told us to meet with the smugglers in "Gudesi" (a place in Athens) in order that we could give them the money (Dallendyshja).

In this travel story we can see the power of new information technology, the power of social networks, and we can see how great the danger was that migrant women were exposed to. The power of new information technology, in this case, meant that the smugglers did not accompany the women, rather executed the entire journey with the use of a mobile phone. The smugglers stayed completely safe, never leaving Athens, while the women were exposed to extreme danger during their travel. Anything could have happened to these women. For example, when they walked over the mountains they could have been caught by the border police. When they travelled over the sea they could have fallen into the water and drowned. Or, they could have been caught by the water police. Sometimes, falling into the hands of the police (especially the border police) is not the safest place for a woman.

We must also emphasise that the women paid the smugglers 180 Euros each when they arrived in Athens. The ticket for the ferry from Corfu to Patra, they bought themselves as well as the ticket from Patra to Athens. The border between Albania and Greece, that is, between Saranda and Corfu is a journey that takes about 30 minutes. For this 30 minute trip they paid 180 Euros. We can clearly see the power of agency. We see how immigrants themselves have discovered ways of resisting the structures made by migration law. They have discovered that passing through Saranda and Corfu might be a good way to enter Greece. But of course

this has its own consequences as we have mentioned above (women could have lost their lives into the sea, etc).

While the above-mentioned payment might seem relatively cheap, another interviewee told me how much she paid for the smugglers:

I paid 600 Euros. It was very expensive for me. When we crossed the border we walked two and a half hours. Oh, it was so rainy, so rainy. And we walked very fast, we ran. I just now, after working for some months for an old sick lady as domestic live-in worker, have managed to pay the debt I had for the travel (Donika).

Here we can see that the payment for the travel was more expensive when compared to the previous case. Also, we can see that Donika had been worked hard just be able to pay the smugglers back. We can see that travelling without documents is not only a very insecure situation, and a very scary experience (which might ends with psychological consequences), but it also costs a lot.

As I have mentioned previously, it is generally known that the creation of the social networks by immigrants themselves, and finally the institutionalisation of these networks (like for example by opening an immigrant's association to protect the rights of immigrants), is a very positive action. This action, taken by human agency, is to the benefit of all migrants. However, when the institutionalisation of these social networks is used to make a profit at the expense of others it might be seen as one of the negative sides to the power of agency. Like for example, when the border police is involved in corruption with the smugglers, at the expense of the immigrant women (as expressed by Pranvera), this might not be seen as a profitable experience for the women. However, even though these women are travelling without documents and are exposed to different sorts of danger, they are changing their situation. They are resisting macrostructures.

On the one hand these women are in a precarity situation; they are victims of structures. But on the other hand they are social agents. That is, on the one hand they are found in a difficult situation due to unemployment in Albania and very dangerous travel conditions yet on the other hand these women are resisting macro-structures by bravely taking the decision to migrate and change their situation. By contacting the smugglers in order to cross the borders, we see how

these women manage to arrive in Athens. Even though in some cases they had to cross the borders many times, finally, they were able to succeed.

I might sound very optimistic in this respect, but the stories of the women interviewed gave me cause to feel this way. It must, however, be emphasised that the crossing of the borders without documents is a very serious issue. It is an issue that can cost one's life. I cannot forget the people who drowned trying to cross the Albanian-Italian border; the Tragedy of Otranto which took place on March 28, 1997 and the Karaburun Tragedy (also known as the 9 January Tragedy in 2004).

I can still hear the voices of the relatives mourning over the loss of their loved ones in these tragedies. The souls of those people, little children, men and women, do not leave me in peace. I cannot close my eyes on these tragedies with the compassionate feelings I still have in my heart. Coming from Albania myself, and being an eye witness to these happenings is the reason I have stressed these tragedies even though there have been many of the same kind of tragedies throughout the world.

Also, we must not forget to mention that all these people that have died crossing the Albanian-Greek border. Even though there is some research done on the painful narratives of border crossings of Albanian immigrants to Greece those that died are not written about (Nitsiakos & Drinis 2014). They died because of the cold weather, the snow, the rain etc. They died crossing the rivers in Greece because they could not use the bridge for fear of the police, etc. Obviously, those that died, we cannot interview. Those that died cannot speak. But, we that have survived, like me and other survivors, must take up the big responsibility to speak. Once again, crossing the borders undocumented is a very serious business. It demands urgent attention. Even though people might know that this is a serious issue, knowing about something and experiencing it, are entirely different things. When we know about a matter, the information is in our mind. But when we experience the matter, it is in our mind and heart. Those who experience, have the power to change (Papadopoulos et. al. 2008).

4.2.4. The arrival

Almost all of my interviewees had their husbands waiting for them in Athens. So, when they arrived to Athens they had a place to stay. However, for three of my

interviewees it has been more difficult to settle in Athens, especially when it came to housing. They all said that when they arrived in Greece their relatives have helped them to settle down. Like for example, Dallendyshja has been helped a lot by her aunty who was already living in Greece. Until she found a job as a domestic live-in worker she stayed with her aunt.

Other interviewees said that their husbands were living in Athens when they arrived. The houses, however, were not in good condition even though their husbands were living there. They said that they had to start from scratch to buy things for the house.

As one of my interviewees said:

When I arrive in Greece we did not even have spoons to eat with. My husband had not bought anything. He lived very simply. I bought the basic things, little by little. Every time I worked and earned some money, I could buy something for the house (Donika).

We see how a woman can make an impact where she lives, and the main argument of this section is the power of human agency through social networks as seen in the interview that follows:

When I arrived in Athens, I was helped by my cousin to stay sometimes in his house. But, I feel it is a heavy load to stay at my cousin's house. I want to find a job that I can live there. I mean, I want to find a job as domestic live-in worker (Jeta).

Again we see how their relatives have helped these women. We see the power of social networks. In this case, Jeta has been helped by her cousin.

In summary, for women whose husbands were living in Greece, the housing issue was not so difficult, but for the women who were independent immigrants, they found it a little more difficult. As in the aforementioned case, the social networks in this case, like cousins, aunts etc, were very important in helping these women settle in Athens.

It has been noted in a previous section, these women generally did not have paid work (very few of them had a very low paid job in Albania) and therefore they decided to migrate, even without documents. It can be, thus, important to explore

how the women found jobs in Greece and what the working conditions were like for them.

4.3. Finding a job in Greece

4.3.1. The ways these women find jobs

When it comes to the ways in which they found their jobs some of my interviewees said that they found the job through relatives and through friends, especially friends from the church.

4.3.1.1. Through relatives

Some of my interviewees had found the job through their relatives like sisters, cousins and aunts. As expressed by one of my interviewees who migrated independently:

My aunt has helped me to find a job when I arrived in Athens. She herself had worked before as a babysitter in that place. She introduced me to the lady who was my employer (Dallendyshja).

Even though Dallendyshja migrated independently, she still had contact with her relatives working in Athens. Here we see that women, through their social networks, manage to have success in a foreign country.

Other women mentioned that church has been a great help in meeting many people and as a source of finding jobs.

4.3.1.2. Through church

Church also has served as a place where immigrants can meet and help each other in finding jobs or discussing other problems. As expressed by one of my interviews, “I have notified all my friends at the church that if they will hear about any job. I am waiting. I trust there will be a job for me (Donika).”

Donika expressed a sense of security because she believes that she might get good news from her friends at the church regarding a job. Even though she is in an insecure situation she has some security which comes from her social networks at the church.

We can still see the power of agency in the middle of structural obstacles that have caused the insecure situation. Like the deregulation of the labour market for example that has caused employment insecurity.

Once again, it must be emphasised that social networks bring about social change. They can resist the structures. In our case, as we continue to emphasise, Albanian women have resisted the economical structures in Albania by deciding to leave the country even without documents. They have resisted the structural obstacles put by migration laws in the border crossing aspect. Albanian women have been able to find jobs even though Greece lacks a program that helps migrants to find jobs. This means that there is no regulation by the state or organisation with regard to employment of immigrants, but these women have managed to find a way themselves regarding this aspect.

Now I return to the jobs these women do. What kind of jobs do they do and what are their working conditions?

4.3.2. Precarious working conditions

All my interviewees have worked in domestic services, like cleaning, cooking, taking care of children, the elderly and the disabled. Some have worked as domestic live-out workers. This means that they have worked during the day at the employer's house and in the evening they went to their own houses. Others have worked as live-in domestic workers. This means that they have stayed at their employer's house all the time.

4.3.2.1. The isolation of domestic work

Almost all my interviewees problematised the isolation of domestic work. They felt that they had lost communication with the outside world, as they worked only indoors with cleaning, cooking, or taking care of children and disabled. Accordingly, they said that they could not talk to anybody. Even when they met the employer in the morning, some of them said that the employer barely greeted them. While both groups, domestic live-out and domestic live-in workers, have felt the isolation of domestic work to a high degree, the second group have felt it even more. As one of my interviewees expressed:

I feel very isolated. I do not meet anybody. When I see my employers, I say to them a good morning. But, they sometimes reply to me and sometimes not. I feel very humiliated. They do not even reply to my greeting. I meet nobody. I just work all day long in the house. I take care of two small children (Entela).

Another of my interviewees said that she felt so isolated and powerless. She feels powerless even to go for a walk outside when she finished her job inside. She said that once she went for walk by the sea and when she came back, the employer was very angry with her. According to her, her employer did not want to let her go out anymore. The employer told her to stay only inside. She felt very worried. She felt like a slave. She says, “I feel like being in the prison, I do not feel free, I feel very bad (Dallendyshja).”

Once again we can see what it means to work in the private sphere; what it means work as a domestic worker. Domestic workers are vulnerable to exploitation of every kind. In the statements above we can see how women experience the total control of their employers, like for example; Dallendyshja was not able even to go for a walk in her free time. However, we should be careful to use ‘the free time’ concept regarding domestic workers. Especially my interviewees, those that were working as domestic live-in workers had not a regular schedule that they could follow. But the schedule could move according to their employers’ request. Domestic work is not regulated by the state; nor is it valued by the state. If it was valued and regulated by the state, women from developed countries would not have to hire immigrant women to perform the reproductive jobs in the first place. As argued by (Sassen 1998; Acker 2006; Anderson 2000), the restoration of global capitalism has produced validity for reducing welfare state programs and has reinforced the claims of non-responsibility in many countries, even though this might vary greatly.

Simultaneously, some fragments of reproductive services move into capitalist economy, becoming accessible only to those that can pay. Greek women are able to pay immigrant women for the reproductive work to be done at home, in order that they can participate in production; in formal labour market. Albanian women in this case are cheap labour which directly fulfils the needs of global capitalism as argued by Sassen (1998). By doing domestic work, these women, directly contribute in maintaining the worker, as Feminist Marxists claim. Marxist

Feminists argue, domestic work creates a commodity which is unquestionably important for capitalism. It produces labour power itself. These women do the reproduction job in order that Greek women can participate in the production.

As one of my interviewees pointed out:

When I worked with an old sick lady I did everything to her. I did everything. I stayed all night awake with her and during the day I did the house chores. My employer was working as a doctor. She could not take care of her mother as she had to go to work. It was me that did everything, day and night (Donika).

It is obvious in this statement, that Greek women hire migrant women to do the caring job at home, in order that they can participate in the formal labour market. In addition to the gender stereotype in the context of global capitalism which places Albanian migrant women automatically in domestic services, racism is another factor that is experienced by my interviewees, that impacts the way these women are treated at the work place. Below I will present my finding of how my interviewees experienced racism.

4.3.2.2. Encountering racism

Castles & Miller (2009) define racism:

As the process whereby social groups categorize other groups as different or inferior, on the basis of phenotypical or cultural markers. This process involves the use of economic, social or political power, and generally has the purpose of legitimating exploitation or exclusion of the groups so defined (p37).

Racism is produced when the dominant power group predicts the character, abilities and behaviour of the minority group based on social indicators of distinction. Racism is expressed in two ways. Firstly, *institutional racism*; the discrimination of the 'other' group by the power group is maintained through structural institutions like laws, policies or administrative practices. Secondly, the informal *racism*; the expression of the racist feelings, attitudes and discriminatory practices by the members of the dominant group towards the 'other' group. When we study racism and how it operates, generally, the idea that biological differences are the main indicators is accepted. However, other factors must be

taken into consideration (as in the case of Albanian migrant women in Greece), such as the specific history of a certain society, religion, culture, language etc. (Castles & Miller 2009 p.37).

According to some researchers, (Baldwin-Edwards 2004; Lazaridis 2000; Vullnetari 2009) Balkans are probably the most affected by history including the history between Albania and Greece. The specific history regarding politics and religion of these two countries has impacted on the deepening gap between “us and them”; between Albanians and Greeks¹. Also, the way the Greek media has represented Albanian immigrants, especially during the first years of their migration, has heavily influenced the formation of racial stereotypes in Greek mindsets towards Albanians (ibid). It is not the aim of this paper to discuss issues related to institutional racism, like laws of migration for example, or how racism is institutionalised through the laws of migration, even though it might be a very interesting subject of study, and probably much needed. The main aim of this section is to talk about informal racism, specifically, how my interviewees have experienced racism. However, I want to emphasise that other scholars have shown how media administrative practices towards immigrants, and specifically, towards Albanian immigrants, in Greece, can be seen as an expression of institutionalised racism.

Browne & Misra (2003) argue that, historically, domestic work has been performed by ethnic minorities. Ethnicity and nationality construct an idea of domestic workers as ‘others’. According to this view, domestic workers do not deserve better working conditions or payment. Working conditions are informal. Domestic workers are at the mercy of the employer in terms of hiring, payment, treatment etc.

All my interviewees have experienced racism in general. When it comes to the work place, while some have experienced severe racism, others have experienced

¹ For more information regarding the special history between Albania and Greece before 1990s, as well as how Greek media has presented Albanian immigrants during the first years of their migration, starting from 1990s, and in doing so, has impacted in forming and adding more racial stereotypes and racist feelings in the mentality of Greeks towards Albanians, see Baldwin-Edwards, Martin (2004). Albanian emigration and the Greek labor market: Economic symbiosis and social ambiguity.

moderate racism. One of my interviewees expressed how embarrassed she felt when her language was ridiculed. She states:

While the feast was going on at my employer's house the little girl that I used to take care of, began reciting a poem in Albanian language that I had taught her. Immediately, one of the guests of the family stood up and asked: What is she reciting? The host said: Mimoza (the domestic worker) has taught her an Albanian poem. He said: ahhhh that kind of language (according to the interviewee he said it in a humiliating way). Oh, I felt very bad. I got hurt extraordinarily. I did not know the language well enough to say to him some words. I did not say anything instead. I went to the other room gingerly and very worried" (Mimoza).

Mimoza was hurt and humiliated when her language was commented on in a dishonourable way. She could not say anything to protect herself as she was not able to say anything in Greek. She just removed herself from the presence of the people.

While women are seen as symbols of the nation, and modesty and motherhood are key elements of this, other women who are considered to be outside the national collectivity face particular forms of racism and exclusion (Lazaridis 2000 p.33). The example above shows clearly how excluded and humiliated Mimoza felt when the Albanian poem, even though recited by a little girl, was depreciated. Also, another women experienced racism from her employer when the guests of the employer came into the house. She said:

Here, in the family where I work, we were having a big celebration. It was the feast of names. My employer told me: I have invited my extended family. But, you must not sit at the table with us. But, why I said to her. But you are foreigner. We do not want you because you are a foreigner. You are not from our family. And my people will say: what? You? What have you done? Why have you allowed an Albanian woman to sit with us? Did you hire her for work or to sit with us on the table? Because they are people of a high rank, they will say to me: did you take her as a servant or to sit at the table. She is for work only. For the moment I said: yes. But, I felt so bad, so bad. I do everything in order to serve her. But they humiliate me. She told me eat before the others start, before the table is set. But, I told her: do not give me to eat because nothing is going to happen if I do not eat one meal. I felt so bad (Dallendyshja).

The example above, apart from strongly showing the element of racism, it also clearly shows the class factor. It shows how big the class gap is between domestic workers and employers, as argued by feminist scholars. Sassen (1998) argues that a “serving class” is created in the context of global capitalism as immigrant women serves the needs of women from developed countries.

Albanian women experience poor treatment based on connected ideas of race and class. After I am finished discussing the race issue, I will return to the discussion of class.

As mentioned elsewhere in this thesis, another way that racism operates is when it is expressed based on religious stereotypes.

Some of my interviewees that come from the Muslim tradition mentioned that they had experienced discrimination in regard to their religion. They said that they had to change their names against their will, in order to be better treated by their Greek employers.

My interviewees stressed that if the employer would discover that they were Muslims, they would be treated differently. One of them said:

Employers ask you: What’s your name. And I tell them my real name. They directly say to me. Aha! You are a Muslim. You are not a Christian like us. They look at you with another eye. They look at you like you are a complete stranger when they learn you are a Muslim. On the other hand, if I would have said to them a Christian name, they would have said to me. Eheheh you are a Christian, you are like us. Later they see you with another eye. I mean, they treat you better (Pranvera).

As Pranvera claims, racism can be expressed through religious marks which makes the gap between ‘us and them’ bigger.

In general, all my interviewees have experienced racism, but a few of them said that they did not remember any specific racist treatment at their work place. This contradicted a little with the findings of other scholars, like Lazaridis (2000) and Anderson (2000) regarding racism and immigrant women, especially Albanian migrant women. However, one explanation would be, that since immigrant women work in such isolated work places they might seldom encounter everyday racism.

However, some of my interviewees said they have experienced racism in public spaces. As expressed by Enkelejda:

I cannot recall any specific case about racism at the work place, but when I travel by bus I have heard Greek people talking about Albanians many times. I feel so angry but I cannot speak as I do not have documents and I do not want to face them. When I was coming by bus from work, I had my son in my arms. Because my son was so tired being at work with me all the time, a Greek lady told me: come and sit here on my seat because you have the child and a Greek man said: do not free the seat for an Albanian. But, all people on the bus shouted out to the man that humiliated me and my child so much. The said: it is ok to hate Albanians but for a child you must have respect. I felt so humiliated, so bad, so angry. I did not say a word. But I just said to myself: May God forgives him for his mentality and his heart that he has. I felt so bad that everybody heard what he said. This is not right, because Greeks also migrate and it is not fair to be discriminated against so publicly (Enkelejda).

Here we can see how racism impacts in everyday life, and in this case, in public places. However, my point in this section is to show how Albanian women have experienced racism especially related to their work.

In summary, it is not only the gender stereotype which is a socially constructed concept that impacts the employment position of Albanian immigrant women in Greece. But, equal to this, is the racial stereotype, which is also a socially constructed concept that impacts the working and living conditions of Albanian immigrant women. These two concepts (gender and race) interact with each other, in the context of global capitalism, and consequently place migrant women in certain positions i.e. doing domestic work, which are informal, isolated and devalued jobs.

Race and gender are both socially constructed concepts that predict the behaviour of certain groups “on the basis of allegedly fixed biological or cultural characteristics” (Castles & Miller 2009 p.40). The ‘occupation’ of domestic work, which has powerfully expanded in almost all developed countries, is gendered and racialised labour where we find the gendered norms that prescribe housework and childcare as natural responsibilities for women, intersecting “with racial stereotypes of ethnic minorities as servants” (Castles & Miller 2009 p.237).

Also, Anthias & Yuval-Davis (1992) argue that: “gender and racialised ethnic divisions are both underpinned by a supposedly natural relation (p.18).”

With regard to gender, she argues that necessary social effects are postulated on the grounds of sexual differences and biological reproduction. For racialised groups the naturalness of culture or the natural boundaries of collectivities are

assumed. A legitimisation of class inequalities is created by the naturalisation of gender and racialised groups that in turn the class processes affect racialisation and gendered practice. The legitimization of class inequalities that are created by naturalization of gender and racial groups gets reiterated as new divisions become established and accepted as new groupings which thus also become institutionalized, naturalized and established (p.18).

In this theoretical section it is shown how gender and race produce class. It shows how class is legitimized by the naturalization of gender and race. It is important to note that Albanian domestic workers in Greece, due to their gender and ethnicity or race, are at the lowest strata of the labour market. They are establishing the middle class status of Greek women. As Sassen (2002) argues a serving class is created by serving the needs of high professionals in global cities in the context of global capitalism. They establish this by doing the reproductive work which would otherwise be performed by Greek women. There is a very close relationship between, gender, race and class. Acker (2006) has discussed the concept of intersectionality. Acker argues that if we admit that gender and race are socially constructed concepts, class is also as such.

Acker (2006 p.39) argues that if we are to understand the life situation of women, we must analyse the concepts of gender, race, class, and other forms of inequality as simultaneous processes, socially constructed, historically and geographically specific; involving material, ideological and psychological elements, which create and recreate unequal economic and power distributions.

Apart from the consequences experienced because of gender stereotypes, which place them automatically in the private sphere, Albanian women experience racial stereotypes due to the history that is specific between Greece and Albania related to politics and religion; also the impact of media on the mindsets of Greeks related to Albanians. In addition to this, being found at the lowest strata of the labour market in Greece, specifically performing domestic duties for Greek families, constructs them as the low class, while the status of Greek women is raised to the middle class (Anderson 2000; Sassen 1998; Acker 2006).

However, even though all my interviewees problematised the isolation of domestic work a lot (that is, how they feel and what it means to them working as a domestic worker) their greatest concern for some of them was not being able to

find a job at all. In other words, employment insecurity, as it will be shown below, was a major problem.

4.3.2.3. Employment insecurity

Out of eleven interviewees, four had a job on a monthly basis. This means that they could find a job for let's say five months. Another four women were working on a daily and hourly basis. And the final three women had not job at all. They were trying to find a job. Employment insecurity was a great problem for these women, whether the women had a job or not. For example, Mimoza, even though she had a job at that moment (she was working as a domestic live-in worker) and said:

Unemployment has become a big problem now in Greece. There are many people that have no jobs. Actually, to be honest women can find jobs as compared to men since they work in cleaning jobs. However, it is difficult for women also in the light of economic crisis. Greek women, to a certain degree, do not hire immigrants as much as they used to, as they do not have money to pay them. They choose to clean their houses themselves instead, or hire immigrants only when they have a very big cleaning job to do (like for example, before Easter and Christmas) (Mimoza).

As Appay (2010) claims, even though in an economically insecure situation all society is affected, not all parts of the society are impacted equally (p.37). The example above shows that because of the economic crisis in Greece, not only immigrants are impacted, but also locals. Of course immigrants and those who do not have documents are affected to a higher degree.

Also, we see the insecurity that Mimoza expressed about losing her job. As said by Rodgers & Rodgers (1989) precarious jobs are those jobs that have a short term prospect and the anxiety of losing it is extraordinary (p.3). In Mimoza's case, we see that she expresses fear about losing her job when she talks about unemployment problem in Greece. Mimoza's position was a short term employment only.

As expressed by one of my interviewees when asked about her payment:

If you go to clean a house in Athens, you get at least five euro per hour. But, I get paid only 20 euro and I work the whole day. But, I had not a job at all. I say to God thank you for giving me this job (Jeta).

There are other interviewees that said to me that they have accepted a low payment just to be able to work; to have a job, to make an income.

Looking at Jeta's example we can see how she has accepted this low paid job because she was unemployed for some time prior to that. As described by Rodgers & Rodgers (1989) and Dörre (2006) work can be considered precarious as long as its low paid. Also, precarious jobs are generally filled by those that have low education in the new economy (Rodgers & Rodgers 1989; Dörre 2006).

As said by another interviewee:

I do not have a job. I do not work every day. Now, I work perhaps two-three days a week. I clean houses. Unemployment is making me very worried. This is my biggest problem. Also, because I do not have papers I am worried. This makes me sad. I am worried about this. Unemployment is my biggest problem. Also, because I have not papers I am worried. This makes me sad. I am worried about this. Unemployment is my biggest problem. Ehh...also, when you do not have documents they do not hire you. There is a law now that the employer is not allowed to employ illegal migrants. If the employer is caught by the police that have employed illegal migrants he gets highly fined. Also they put me into prison and deport me to Albania if they catch me. So, documents are very much important also, very much! I have children also. They get sick. I have to move. So, I am filled with fear of the police. I am not free! I cannot go in Albania because I have not documents. I want to see my parents. I miss them very much. I have not seen them for ten years (Albana).

The concept of precarity involves instability, lack of protection, social and economic vulnerability, and insecurity (Rodgers & Rodgers 1989 p.3). Work can be considered precarious when it is irregular. In Albana's case, we can see that she works on a daily basis. She does not have a stable job at all. And the fact that she does not have documents places her in a vulnerable position. She feels insecure economically and psychologically as she lives every day with the fear of deportation.

Similarly, another woman said:

Now I am unemployed. I do not have a job. Also my husband is unemployed. I just wait for any phone call. I have spread the news everywhere but nothing has happened. Ehh, we go to church- I notified them also. But I am just trusting God in this situation. I do not know what the future holds (Donika).

In this case we can see that Donika's situation, on the one hand, is totally precarious as she was not working at that time. However, on the other hand, we can see that through her social networks (through her friends and her church) she is trying to resist the situation of precarity. As I have mentioned elsewhere the precarity concept is applied in this thesis as a reflection of precarious positions of Albanian immigrants and is seen as double-edged. This means that these women are in a position of exploitation. But at the same time, they are in a position where they can mobilise themselves to change their situation, as argued by (Waite 2009 p.413).

It is very important to notice what some of the women (who I will detail below) did to in order to resist their precarity situation related to their employment.

Even though they were living with their husbands and children in Athens, they accepted a job where they would live-in at their employer's residence even though this was not their preferred choice. They simply could not find a job where they could work during the day only or where they could work as live-out domestic worker. It must be noted that, in general, in the Albanian mindset it is not acceptable for a women to leave her family to go and live elsewhere. But these women are breaking those gender stereotypes.

As expressed by one of my interviewees:

I accepted to go and work as live-in domestic worker. I left my husband and my son and went to live and work at the house of the employer. I took care of an old sick lady until she died. I worked there for two and a half months. I have suffered so much. I had to stay awake day and night with her. She could not move from the bed. My employer could not even let me go and meet my husband and son on Sunday, as agreed. But, I accepted the job. I had no other choice. It is not so normal for an Albanian to leave your family and work and live in another house. But I did. My husband was unemployed, my son too. I had to do something (Donika).

It is clearly seen that even though Donika found herself in a precarity situation she took steps to change it. She not only helped the family get an income but she

broke the gender stereotype, which impacted her life in a negative way. While Albanian women are seen completely submissive to their husbands, Donika broke this stereotype by living and working on her own.

Likewise, another woman stated:

I work as a live-in domestic worker. I take care for a teenager who is very sick. I chose to leave my family, my husband and children. I needed to work. I know, somebody might say, what did she do? But, I do not care what others say. I want to work. I go every Sunday to meet my husband and children. I am satisfied I have a job (Pranvera).

Here also we can see how Pranvera has accepted a job where she lived at the house of the employer. She left her family in Athens and followed her job. Of course it is not good to leave your family; everyone wants to stay with their family. But, when they find themselves in conditions that are unacceptable (that is, being unemployed) they dare to step outside the expected gender stereotypes and find other solutions. My aim here is to highlight that even though Albanian women are in a vulnerable situation, they have found ways of resisting it, or to escaping it, as described by (Papadopoulos et. al. 2008):

The art of escape appears magical, but it is the mundane, hard and sometimes painful every day practises that enable people to craft situations that seem unimaginable when viewed through the lens of the constraints of the present (p. xiii).

It is the seemingly insignificant events in an everyday life where we look for social change (Papadopoulos et. al. 2008 p. xiii). Accordingly, the fact that these women are working in an informal economy can be regarded as they are resisting macro-structures. They are changing their situation.

However, I must be careful when talking about change. While for most of the women interviewed changes for them escalated, but there are some women whose situation has only changed in very small increments.

For example, one woman said:

My husband does not allow me at all to work as a live-in domestic worker, not at all. He does not even like it when I go to work at the Greek house during the day. He

told me: do not work in the house cleaning. I will give you money. But I really like to work, so much. I am so restrained by my husband. Above all, I do not have documents. He has documents but I do not. He would not let me come here to be interviewed if I told him the truth. But I told him only half of the truth. I told him I am going to visit my brother. I did not tell him I am being interviewed (Drita).

Drita was interviewed at the house of her brother for the above mentioned reasons. Here we can see how Drita feels so isolated from her husband. She does not feel free. However, Drita still used other ways of changing her situation. Starting from the beginning she was able to enter Greece undocumented, without her husband. Her husband was waiting for her in Greece. Also, she tries to find jobs as live-out domestic workers (as a cleaner etc). Furthermore, she is trying very hard to acquire documents and change her situation.

I will come back later to the documentation issue.

Even though Drita's case might not indicate a change with big steps, we still see that change has started to happen in her life span.

With respect to change, we can see how the three women that I interviewed have migrated without their husbands or fathers as shown by other researchers (Lazaridis 2000; Anderson 2000; Vullnetari 2009). Change has already started since they left Albania on their own and did not have their family waiting for them in Athens as in the case of other eight women that I interviewed. Of course we can see that they are helped by social networks, relatives and friends; but they are living on their own in Athens. This is a high degree of change, considering the Albanian context.

Albanian women try to change their situation by trying to acquire documents after arrival to Greece as it will be shown below.

4.3.3. Fixing the papers

As mentioned elsewhere in this thesis, Albanian women have entered Greece without documents. For those that were married and had their husbands in Athens, they said that their husbands could not take them to Greece through the family reunification strategy because they have not been able to fulfil the criteria of this strategy imposed by migration laws. These men did not pay the socially security

schemes called "ika". They have not had a stable job. They have worked in the informal economy even though they had documents. As said by Drita:

It is to the benefit of the employer not to pay "ika". The employer has to pay a certain amount of money to the state for the employees if his work is being registered. But, the employer does not do that. He just pays the employer in cash. This is a black job. So, he does not have the amount of "ika" required by migration law in order to bring me to Greece through family reunification strategy. So, I am undocumented (Drita).

Here we can see the consequence of the deregulated labour market in post-Fordism. The informal economy has expanded and the trade unions have disappeared. We see on the one hand, how the employer is privileged under these policies and on the other hand, the worker is left without any power.

The example above also shows how the migration laws in Greece represent migrant women as followers of the male breadwinner. We can see the gender stereotype put by migration laws. As described by Castles & Miller (2009), the role of gender is seen in immigration laws that still treat women as dependant migrants and men as the main breadwinner (p.40). EU (European Union) immigration laws, regard migrant women as dependent on their husbands in the case of family reunification (Kolthoff 2007 p.2).

However, in our case Albanian men still cannot fulfil the criteria demanded by migration law in the family reunification strategy in Greece. Therefore, women migrate undocumented which can be seen as an act of social change; social transformation, as we have said in the "Flight" section.

However, after arrival in Greece, the undocumented status impacts negatively on them in many areas. As described by Anderson (2000) "your passport is your life" (p.179).

First of all they live in the fear of everyday deportation as expressed by one interviewee:

I feel very bad; you do not feel good at all. And when I walk on the streets, I walk filled with fear that the police might catch me. Or when I see the police with motorcycles that go on the street, I say: Oh God, what can I do now (Jeta)?

Also, the undocumented status, to a high degree, has an impact on the working conditions as described by one interviewee:

My employer has added me more work than agreed and she did not add the money. Also I worked more hours than agreed and she did not add me money. I tried to ask my rights. Because I know it is wrong if you do not ask your rights. But, she told me: if you do not like; go! I will find another one. But, I did not go. Now, I do not raise my voice anymore. I do not have documents. I have to subordinate myself; to submit to her. I do not have documents. My employer does not fear the state since I am without documents. She does what she wants. She might also call the police for deportation if she wants (Vera).

Vera's statement shows how she accepts her situation and submits herself to her employer as she does not have documents. She feels insecure because of her undocumented status and is afraid to demand her rights because she might even get deported. It seems to me to be contradictory; on the one hand Vera is needed as a cleaner (there is a demand for domestic workers in Greece) but on the other hand, she lives in fear of deportation because of her undocumented status.

The insecurity produced by undocumented status is defined by De Genova (2005) as deportability when he studied the interaction of migration laws with the demands of labour market in US. According to De Genova, deportability is not the act of deportation itself but "the possibility of deportation, the possibility of being removed from the space of the US nation-state (p.8). This continually current risk of being deported, organizes migrant's potential variety of choices, space of action and positions. He further states, it is the deportability (the fear of deportation) and not the deportation per se, which has historically condensed Mexican labour to be a noticeably disposable commodity. While some migrants are deported, the most remain un-deported in the country. Being without documents provides a mechanism for creating and supporting the vulnerability and docility of migrant workers in US (De Genova 2005 p.8).

De Genova's claims are in line with Vera's experience as well as with my other interviewees. Because Vera lives in the fear deportation, the fear of being caught by the police, she is subordinated, submitted to her employer. She can actually be perceived as a disposable commodity, as she is subjected to her employer to do whatever she says. However, we must also see that Vera, in a way, is resisting the

macro-structures; that is, the migration law structure. She is working in the informal economy and in difficult working conditions and in doing so she is trying her best to change her situation.

Another problem that was encountered by undocumented migrant women that had small children, was the fact that their children were not accepted in to the kindergarten because of their undocumented status.

As expressed by one interview:

My son is not accepted in kindergarten because I do not have any 'ika'. Actually, I do not have papers. How can I have "ika". The people where I work as a cleaner, gave me a paper where it states that this woman works for us. But, nothing happened. The director of kindergarten told me: You do not have "ika". But you do not have documents either which makes the situation more difficult. But this is very bad for a child. He is innocent (Enkelejda).

Found in this circumstance Albanian women try to change their undocumented status by paying a lawyer to take up the case. All my interviewees talked about the right to acquire documents. According to them there is a law that permits immigrants to acquire documents, but you must have a lawyer advocating your case and of course pay him/her. Out of eleven women, five of them had started the process of acquiring the necessary documents. But almost all of them had not achieved this goal at that stage.

As said by one of my interviewees:

I went twice. There was a lawyer who first got my money and later he changed his phone number. He did not arrange my documents. I searched for him but I could not find him anymore. Later, I found another lawyer. My husband had known him from years ago. The first court case, I did not win. Now, I have another court case. I have been trying to arrange my documents for three years but nothing has happened. Even though I have a child that has been born here, I have had so much difficulty in acquiring documents...the lawyers keep us hoping that they will succeed on our behalf, but they just take our money and they do not arrange our documents. When I did not win my court case, I went to my lawyer and said to him: did you know that I will not win? He told me: You have to pay in both cases - when you win and when you do not win. You might win the court case in two years, five years, or never. But you always have to pay the money (Enkelejda).

Similarly, another woman stated:

Eight years ago I started the process of acquiring my documents. Up to now, I have paid four lawyers. During these eight years, I have paid each of them two thousands, eight thousands Euros in total. They have just taken my money and have not arranged any papers. They gave me a big sack with papers that have no value. If the police learn that I have no documents, they will deport me immediately (Drita).

These women try to do their best to change their situation even though the lawyers are not acting justly. These findings correlate with the findings taken from the Albanian women's associations.

A leader of an Albanian migrant association in Greece told me: "It has been a golden age for lawyers since the regularization schemes appeared (Leader of a migrant's association in Athens)."

These women on the one hand are in a precarity situation regarding their legal status as well as with respect to lawyers, but on the other hand they are taking action. Like for example, Enkelejda in the statement above, has not given up on acquiring documents. Even though her first lawyer disappeared, she got another lawyer to follow her case. She still hopes she will acquire documents. Some other women were waiting to acquire documents, like Enkelejda for example.

While some women have spent money on acquiring documents and are waiting in order that their dreams will come true (to acquire documents), others have not started to arrange them at all. One of my interviewees said that she lacks the money to start the process:

Ehh! You must have lots of money, you must invest lots of money to acquire documents. Where can I find all that money? I do not have money. So, I cannot do the documents (Albana).

Another woman stated:

I have not started to do the documents. Many people have started to arrange the documents and are paying large amount of money. But, I have heard that these people that are doing papers have not managed to arrange them in the end. To arrange the papers needs lots of time and money. I have heard, even though people had started to arrange the documents, they got deported. The lawyers give you some

white papers but not the ones that protect you from the police. My employer told me: It is better to go and visit your parents when you miss them by paying the smugglers 1,500 euro than paying larger amounts of money for papers to the lawyers and you never manage to get them (Dallendyshja).

Here we can see how these two women have not started to do the documents at all. For the above mentioned reasons they had not started the process at all. In the case of Dallendyshja, it can also be said that the employer is trying to keep her under control. In a way the employer is contributing more to her isolation, considering that she works as a live-in domestic worker. But these women have not stopped to dream about acquiring them. I will touch the dream aspect later in this thesis.

In conclusion, it can clearly be seen that these women are in a precarity situation as a consequence of macro-structures. Migration laws and all the corruption associated to them, are a big structure in this case; a structure which is reinforced by neoliberal policies that allow ideas and capital to circulate around the globe but human beings, in this case, are less important than capital. That is, while capital circulates freely everywhere, people are restricted by different migration laws. But still we must pay attention to the action taken by these women in resisting these structures, as I have mentioned elsewhere in this thesis.

4.4. Future plans

When asked about the future plans, most of my interviewees said that it is very difficult for them to plan the future right now.

4.4.1. Difficulties in planning the future

All my interviewees said that the economic crisis that has hit Greece has impacted negatively on their opportunities to find jobs and consequently to plan the future. As expressed by one of my interviewee:

Ehh! Now as this time is coming. Ehh! I mean this economical time. I do not expect anything now. I expect nothing good. Ehh! We will be as we have been. As is becoming now in Greece, jobs are disappearing. There are no jobs. Also, in Albania they say it is getting worse every day. My mum keeps telling me on the phone that in Albania there are no jobs at all. Ehh! The money that we earn, we first count it to

pay the rent of the house, the electricity, the water, and the money remaining we use to eat food. Only God may help us in this situation. We do not have a job. I do not know if I can find a working day tomorrow. Ehh! Now Greek people are not often hiring domestic workers. The job that you did once a week now you do it once a month. I do not know what is going to happen. I have no plans (Albana).

Albana's case expresses a sense of insecurity about her future. Her husband does not work. Basically, as seen in her story, she worked on an hourly and sometimes daily basis because it had become a big problem in Greece to find a job and therefore she could not make plans.

As described by Dörre (2006) and Rodgers & Rodgers (1989) that precarity it is not only an increasing living situation characterised by unfavourable working conditions, insecurity, material deficits and lack of recognition. But, it is said that precarity, in particular, limits the opportunities for people to make future plans as it can be seen in the case of Albana. However, while for these women it is difficult to make any particular future plans they still continue to persist on their dreams, hoping they one day will come true.

4.4.2. Dream to build a house in Albania

One of my interviewees says:

My dream is to build house in Albania. My dream is to build a new house in Albania. Ehh! I did not have conditions in the previous one. I did not even have a bathroom where I could bathe my children. The wind would enter in the house from all corners. I did not have good house conditions at all. I am dying to see a new house of my own. I do not want to stay in Greece, no. I want to build my own house. But I do not know how it will be as there is so much unemployment in Greece (Donika).

Similarly the other interviewee said:

I want to work hard. Ehh! I have become sad working as a live-in domestic worker. But, I want to buy a little house in Albania. To have my own house. This is my dream to have my own house and to take a cook course (Dallendyshja).

Even though Donika expressed a sense of insecurity because of unemployment problem in Greece, these women still persevere in achieving their dreams. In the face of insecurity these women they still hope for their dreams to come true.

Another desire was expressed by all my interviewees, was that they would acquire documents.

4.4.3. Dream to acquire documents

As expressed by one of my interviewees:

My future plans are to fix the documents. For me this is very important to arrange the documents. I need to be a legal migrant. I desire to require documents a lot, and when I have documents I can go to Albania and visit my daughters. I want to provide for my daughters education. This is why I migrated; I want to earn money in order to support my daughters as they study in Albania. I want them to have a university education. This is my main wish. But it seems difficult as now in Greece it is difficult to find a job. I do not know how things will go. I am confused about what is going to happen next (Jeta).

Also another interviewee said:

I wish I could acquire documents; so I can be a regular migrant. And when I am regular migrant, I might find a job more easily; they will pay me better and they will treat me with dignity and not in and humiliating way as they do now. I can then claim my rights and fear no one. I also hope that I can send my son to kindergarten when I am a regular migrant (Enkelejda).

Even though these women are found in a precarity situation, in many areas of their life, they have not stopped to dream. Despite the fact that they have faced discouragement and challenges in acquiring documents they still dream they will achieve this dream.

To sum up, we can see that these women have dreams of being able to buy a house in Albania as well as they dream of acquiring documents in Greece, but their hopes are blurred because of the unemployment situation that has paralysed the country. And as mentioned by my interviewees, it is not only Greece, but also Albania that has been impacted by economic crisis. Once again, the Albanian case shows the consequences of global capitalism which operates through neoliberal

policies. Being found in an informal economy, in a deregulated labour market, Albanian women are in an insecure situation. They are surrounded by economic, political, and social structures. However, they still try to resist these structures in different ways. For example, the fact that they are undocumented immigrants and live in a fear of deportation can be considered as an act of resistance. The fact that they work in an informal economy can also be regarded as resistance. As described by Papadopoulos et. al. (2008) we witness acts of resistance, or escape, when people develop informal social networks on which they can rely; sustain the capacity to work in insecure and highly precarious conditions and live as undocumented migrants.

If we look at the whole picture, in the case of Albanian women, we can see that even though they are found in precarious living and working conditions (starting in Albania), these women have used this precarity situation to turn their lives around. Through the social networks they cross the borders. After arrival in Greece they try everything to find a job. Those that were living with their husbands in Athens left their husbands and followed the job as live-in domestic worker. By doing this they broke the gender stereotype that Albanian women are accompanied by husbands or fathers. Also, the three women that migrated independently tell this.

They also tried to acquire documents and change their situation, but had not succeeded at that stage. Albanian women are found in a precarity situation because of macro-structures, that is social, economic and political structures. But, they resist these structures and change their lives even if that change is in a moderate way. I think these women need to have more cooperation with other women and organisations, in order to raise their voice together and to continue the change at the political level. In other words, changing the laws of migration etc.

5. Discussion and concluding remarks

In the context of economic restructuring and globalisation, the employment of people in general, and that of women in particular, has become difficult. Especially people from developing countries are generally constrained to migrate to a more developed country than their own, in order to survive. But since the migration laws have imposed restrictions on people's movements, they migrate in dangerous travelling conditions. They cross the international borders undocumented and work and live in the receiving country as such. Being undocumented puts these people in the most precarious position. Even though they are undocumented they still entitled to basic rights according to international conventions. But, they are constrained to accept discrimination related to the working and living conditions even when it contradicts their rights since they are afraid that if they try to assert their rights they may be discovered by the police and be deported to the country of origin. Therefore it is important to explore the situation of undocumented immigrants, and especially, women. I emphasise the study of immigrant women as compared to immigrant men, because women experience discrimination based on gender. It is important to explore the factors that have led to migrant women being in certain situations. Also it is important to look at the efforts made by these women in order to resist the structural factors. I have studied at the Albanian case as an example; Albanian undocumented migrant women in Greece.

Even though it is perceived that Albanian women nowadays enter Greece through the reunification family strategy, not everyone can use this method of entering Greece. Therefore, in Greece there are undocumented Albanian migrant women who need attention from migration scholars and consequently from politicians. This study explored the experiences of the everyday life of these women. Based on the women's experiences, the study finds out the structural factors that have defined the situation of Albanian undocumented migrant women in Greece. The study also looks at the efforts taken by these women to resist structural factors.

None of my interviewees had a future in Albania in regard to employment. In Albania, the employment problem started with the beginning of the transition of the country from a commanded economy to an open market economy, and it continues to be the same. While most of my interviewees did not have a paid job

at all in Albania, a few of them had a paid job but it was very low paid and with difficult working conditions. Being found in this situation and having heard through social relations that by going to Greece they could find work, as Greek women usually employ immigrant women to do their domestic work, they migrated. The decision to migrate and the act of migrating without documents; are seen as acts of resistance undertaken by these women in order to resist the economic structures in Albania i.e. unemployment. Even though surrounded by political structures, especially regarding the migration laws that constrain migrants to enter the receiving country, they still dare to contact the smugglers, cross the borders, and finally, enter Greece.

Upon arrival in Greece, women have been helped by their husbands (those that already had husbands in Greece) and by their relatives (those that did not have their family in Greece). They found jobs through their friends that they mostly met at the church, and through their relatives, like cousins, aunts, etc. The job that they did was mostly domestic work. The women problematised the isolation of domestic work. They experienced racism at the place of work, as well as in public spaces. But still they have not experienced racism to the same degree as found by other researchers like Lazaridis (2000).

In the context of economic crisis, they are faced with employment insecurity in Greece. These women have unstable jobs. They find it difficult to find jobs, even as a domestic worker. But when faced with the employment insecurity they found ways of resisting this economic structure. Those women that are living with their families in Greece leave their families and find a job as a domestic life-in worker. This is a big change for Albanian women considering strong patriarchal view about gender i.e. that women are supposed to be at home after their day is finished. Thus these women do not only resist the economic structures but social structures also i.e. gender stereotypes.

They experience the consequences of undocumented status and live in the fear of everyday deportation. This impacts many areas of their life, such as, in the living and working aspect; taking the right medical care; their children are not accepted at the kindergarten, etc. To resist this insecure situation they have started to acquire documents but the lawyers are not working honestly regarding the issue of documents. Some of these women have paid large amount of money but still have not succeeded in acquiring documents. Most of them, however, continue to

persevere in following the issue on arranging documents. When it comes to future plans they find it difficult to make plans for the future because of employment insecurity. However, they still have not stopped dreaming of a brighter future. They dream of fixing a house in Albania and also dream that one day they will be able to acquire documentation. Albanian immigrant women are found in a precarity situation, starting from unemployment in Albania to the present time in Greece. But as it has been described above, even though these women are found in a precarity situation as a result of global capitalism, gender stereotypes, racism and migration laws, they have not chosen to surrender to these macro-structures. On the contrary, the precarity situation has served as a situation that has empowered these women to resist macrostructures in small but meaningful and important ways. As Papadopoulos et. al. (2008) argues, it is at the most difficult times in people's lives that inspired them to perform acts of change. Even though the changes and the acts of resistance might not be so big, it is these small changes that are the stepping stones to greater and significant change.

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6.1. Appendix A

The interview guide

1. Did you have a job in Albania? What did you work?
2. How did you hear about the jobs in Greece?
3. How did you enter Greece? Can you describe the journey? How was it? What is your experience?
4. Can you talk a little bit about your arrival? How was it in finding a house?
5. How did you find jobs? What kind of jobs do you do? Is it difficult to find jobs at the present?
6. What is your experience regarding payment? Days off and the schedule from the employer? Do you remember any time that you had a bad experience regarding payment and working schedule?
7. What is your experience regarding racism? How did you feel when others discovered or you introduced yourself that you are from Albania? Do you remember any time that you have experienced racism? How did you feel?
8. How do you feel being without papers in an everyday life? When walking in the street? At your job? When going to the doctor? When sending the children to school?
9. Does your husband have papers; have you tried to fix papers?
10. What are your future plans?
11. What's your education?
12. What's your age?
13. What do you think that it would be good to improve in your place of work?
14. Which is your biggest worry?