



Reactivating the debate on contemporary Albanian migrations: an updated state-of-the-art

Organisers:

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Abstract

The aim of the proposed session is to update the discussion on Albanian migration, which has been a mainstream phenomenon in the last three decades; so mainstream that the country has been characterized as 'a laboratory for the study of migration' (King, 2005). Albania is among the twenty major export-countries in the world with respect to its population (World Bank, 2016). In 2020, the Albanian emigration rate worldwide passed over 30 percent (1.25 million people), with most of Albanians abroad concentrated in Italy (43%) and Greece (35%) (OECD, 2022). Greece, that has been a major destination for Albanian emigrants since the 1990s, still captures an important part of this out-migration. In 1991, Albanian citizens formed 12% of the whole migrant stock in Greece, in 2001 surpassed 57%, and in 2011 formed approximately 53% of the total foreign population. In the last Greek Census (2021), Albanians still form the major migrant group, reaching 49% of foreigners.

The proposed session seeks to provide an updated state-of-the-art on contemporary Albanian migrations, both internal and international. It seeks to contribute inter alia to the growing interest on the the role of internal and international migration (out-migration, in-migration, return migration) in urbanization and the transformation of the urban hierarchy in Albania. This also concerns comprehending the paradox of the extension of the built environment and the housing stock in cities, while some of them are losing population: is there a role played by migrant remittances? The session is also interested to host papers that explore the triangle Albania- Italy – Greece, these three countries forming a particular migration system that has persisted in the last decades, the two latter remaining the main destinations of Albanian out-migration since the 1990s. We are, also, interested in the 'destiny' of the proto-migrants in Italy and Greece during the 1990s, yet also of their offspring, that is 2nd and 3rd generation of Albanians in these countries. From a geographic perspective, we seek to know more on the migratory paths of these people (proto-migrants, migrants, returnees, etc.) within these two countries and also to study the role played by place-based characteristics in the degree of migrant integration into host societies at the local level: are there any commonalities between regions/districts/places of departure in Albania and those of

arrival in Greece and Italy? Therefore, we welcome as well papers that explore the directionality of the contemporary Albanian migrations, internal and international: Which are the areas that “expel” migrants and which are those that “absorb” them within the triangle Albania-Greece -Italy? Do migrations circa 1990-2000s share any common patterns with current and previous movements? What are the linkages (if any) of these patterns with the urban/territorial organization of Albania before and after 1990? Last but not least, papers that deal with the geographic differentials in the aging process in Albania are also of interest to the proposed session (for instance, the loss of the demographic dividend, i.e., the concentration of the population in working ages): What is the role played by the significant decline in fertility and internal and international migration movements in this phenomenon? These are some of the questions and the issues that we aspire to raise and discuss in this session; yet, they are indicative and by no means exclusive.

The proposed Special Session is related to a small research project of prof. Kokkali that will be funded by the University of Thessaly. At the time of the submission, the research project has not been yet inaugurated (it is estimated that it will start by April 2025). The proposed session seeks to become a forum of exchange and interaction among researchers working on contemporary Albanian migrations, and in particular on their geo-socio- demographic aspects. The session is therefore open to submissions/contributions from researchers outside the research team, focusing also on the involvement of ERSAs members.