

**EMIGRATING FROM ALBANIA OR IMMIGRATING TO ALBANIA?
THE CASE OF ITALIAN SKILLED IMMIGRANTS**

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Abstract:

The main aim of this paper is to analyze from the transnational perspective of migration, the immigration of Italians in Albania, phenomenon that have occurred within 10 last years.

The sociological literature has always put the attention on the Albanian immigration to Italy, but nowadays we can also discuss about the Italian immigration to Albania. According to the official data, around 19.000 Italians have the permit to live in Albania for work or study reasons. Contemporary forms of migration are nowadays understood as a dimension of globalisation processes, but can globalisation explain the immigration of Italians to Albania?

The methods used to gather the data in this study are: secondary data analysis and qualitative methods of data collection through semi-structured interviews, focus-groups and free discussions with the Italian immigrants who live in Albania. In the interviewing process (both individual interviewing and focus-groups) participated 37 immigrants. The thematic analysis, based on the labeling and coding, has been used to gather the study findings.

The research showed that some push, pull and "network" factors have influenced the migratory project of the Italian immigrants in Albania.

Keywords: Italian immigrants, Albania, globalisation, push factors, pull factors, "network" factors

JEL Classification: Z

1. Introduction

The sociological literature has always put the attention on the Albanian immigration to Italy, but nowadays we can also discuss about the Italian immigration to Albania. According to the official data, around 19.000 Italians have the permit to live in Albania for work or study reasons, after decades of migration the other way¹³. This is a very important target, looking that the Albanian population who live inside Albania is around 3 million inhabitants.

¹³ http://time.ikub.al/Lajm_Rreth-19-000-italiane-punojne-ne-Shqiperi-Velaj-ne-Rome-per-pensionet-e-emigranteve.aspx, accessed on 12.05.2015

A growing number of Italians have made the short hop across the Adriatic Sea to work at Albanian universities, hospitals, call centres, or open restaurants and other small businesses in the past two years. According to the data from Italian Chamber of Commerce in Albania there are 500-600 Italian enterprises, which operate in Albanian context, mostly males 25-50 years old. They come from North, Center and South of Italy and live mostly in big cities of Albania: Tirana, Durrës, Vloora, Shkodra¹⁴. Usually are skilled immigrants and possess a high human capital, but even professionals who work as artisans, electricians, mechanics etc.

2. Migration of Italians to Albania. Exploring theories

The 2009 Human Development Report notes that the vast majority of migrants move within, rather than between nations. Of those who do cross national borders, 37 percent of international migrants move from developing countries to developed countries. Far more international migrants, (60 percent) move within countries of the same category of development. Only three percent of international migrants moved from developed countries to developing countries¹⁵. This paper aims to explore the case of immigration of Italians toward Albania, one of its neighbor countries, part of ex-socialist block during the years 1945-1991.

After the breakdown of the communist regime in Albania in 1990, Italy had been the main immigration target for Albanians leaving their country. This was because Italy had been a symbol of the West for many Albanians during the communist period, because of its geographic proximity. Nowadays there are more that 500.000 Albanian immigrants who live and work in Italy¹⁶. But after 2010 it is showed that a considerable number of immigrants from Italy are reaching Albania. As a matter of fact, during the Economic Crisis that started on 2008, In Europe migration trends between Europe and some less developed countries such as South America and Africa, reversed. French, Italian and Spanish immigrants are heading to Brazil as well. In 2008 and 2009, more than 100,000 Europeans, including those with dual nationality left Europe to live in South America or the Caribbean¹⁷. It seems the same trend for the case of immigration from Italy to Albania as well.

¹⁴ http://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2013/11/01/news/italiani_d_albania_i_migranti_ora_siamo_noi-,_70018678/?refresh_ce, accessed on 12.05.2015.

¹⁵ <http://www.globalization101.org/uploads/File/Migration/migration.pdf>, pp. 8.

¹⁶ <http://www.culturaalbanese.it/index.php?lang=it&Itemid=112>

¹⁷ <http://www.globalization101.org/uploads/File/Migration/migration.pdf>, pp.18.

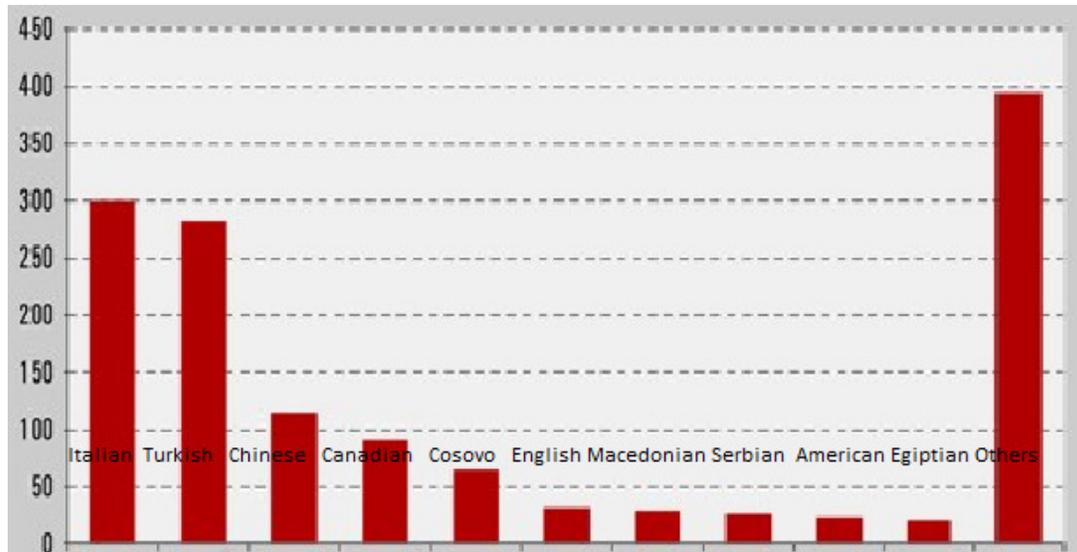


Figure 1: The foreigners in Albania according to their nationality, Albanian Construction Portal¹⁸

A variety of reasons lie behind migration. People may migrate in order to improve their economic situation, or to escape civil strife, persecution, and environmental disasters. Traditionally, the reasons encouraging an individual to migrate were categorized as "push" or "pull" factors. Globalization has introduced a third set of motivations called "network" factors, which include free flow of information, improved global communication and faster and lower cost transportation. While network factors are not a direct cause of migration, they do facilitate it.¹⁹ Globalization refers to the global economic integration of many formerly national economies into one global economy, mainly by free trade and free capital mobility, but also by somewhat easier or uncontrolled migration²⁰.

At present, there is no single, coherent, theory that explain international immigration. Current pattern and trends in immigration suggest that a full understanding of contemporary migratory and its complexity requires a sophisticated theory that incorporates a variety of perspectives, levels and assumptions.

Which theories explain this trend of Italian immigration in Albania?

According to neoclassical economics, as a macro theory, international migration, is caused by geographic differences in the supply of and demand for labour. The movement of capital also includes human capital, with highly skilled workers moving from capital-rich to capital-poor countries in order to reap high returns on their skills in a human capital-scarce environment, leading to a parallel movement of managers, technicians, and other skilled worker²¹.

¹⁸ Albanian Construction Portal, <https://acp.al/news/232/Te-huajt-drejt-Shqiperise-per-punesim,-kryesojne-Italianet/>, accesed on 02. 06.2015

¹⁹ <http://www.globalization101.org/uploads/File/Migration/migration.pdf>, pp. 2.

²⁰ **Herman E. Daly, Population, Migration, and Globalization** *World Watch Magazine*, September/October 2004, Volume 17, No. 5. <http://www.worldwatch.org/node/559>

²¹ Douglas S. Massey, Joaquin Arango, Graeme Hugo, Ali Kouaouci, Adela Pellegrino, J. Edward Taylor, *Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal*, *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Sep., 1993), pp. 431-466
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On the other hand, according to neoclassical economics, as a micro theory, individuals are rational actors who decide to migrate because of a cost-benefit calculation, who lead them to expect usually a positive net return, usually monetary one, from movement. International migration is conceptualized as a form of investment in human capital²².

Another theory that can explain the Italian trend of immigration in Albania is the theory of dual labour market. According to this theory, immigration is not caused by push factors in sending countries (low wages or high unemployment), but by pull factors in receiving countries. Workers in the capital-intensive primary sector get stable, skilled jobs working with the best equipment and tools. Employers are forced to invest in these workers by providing specialized training and education. Their jobs are complicated and require considerable knowledge and experience to perform well, leading to the accumulation of firm-specific human capital²³.

It is interesting to see this trend of immigration from the perspective of world systems theory. According to this theory, migration is a natural outgrowth of disruptions and dislocations that inevitably occur in the process of capitalist development. Driven by a desire for higher profits and greater wealth, owners and managers of capitalist firms enter poor countries on the periphery of the world economy in search of land, raw materials, labor, and new consumer market. According to world systems theory, migration is a natural outgrowth of disruptions and dislocations that inevitably occur in the process of capitalist development, among others through material links and ideological links. The diffusion of core country languages and cultural patterns and the spread of modern consumption patterns interact with the emergence of a transportation/communication infrastructure to channel international migration to particular core countries²⁴.

The empirical study aimed to explore the reasons of immigration to Albania according to Italian immigrants, who participated in this research.

3. Methodology

The methods used in this study are: secondary data analysis and qualitative methods of data collection through semi-structured interviews, focus groups and free discussions with the Italian immigrants who live in Albania. In the interviewing process (both individual interviewing and focus-groups) participated 37 emigrants: 24 males and 13 females, from 18 to 60 years old.

The instrument used to gather data was a semistructured questionnaires. The thematic analysis, based on the labeling and coding, has been used to gather the study findings.

4. Study limitations

- There exists a gap in the theoretical frame that explain the process of immigration from developed countries to the less developed ones.
- Except some journalistic articles in Italian journals such as "Corriere della sera", il "Messaggero", "La Repubblica" etc., there are no studies and researches for the Italian immigration in Albania.

²² Ibid

²³ Piore, Michael J. 1979. *Birds of Passage: Migrant Labor in Industrial Societies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

²⁴ Douglas S. Massey, Joaquin Arango, Graeme Hugo, Ali Kouaouci, Adela Pellegrino, J. Edward Taylor, *Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal*, *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Sep., 1993), pp. 431-466
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- There are no official statistics data that show the geographical distribution of Italian immigrant in Albania.
- The study is based on an qualitative methodology and not in a quantitative one and does not aim to generalize the findings.

5. Exploring the reasons of immigration. The empirical findings

According to the in depth interviews, three sorts of factors of their immigration to Albania have been identified:

1. Push factors

Push factors are generated from the place of origin which force people to move.

a. Economical global crises

According to a big part of the interviewees, the economical crisis in Italy have limited their chances to work as professionals.

R.P., female 47, during her interview sad:

“Here in Albania I work as a doctor in a very prestigious clinical center. I have a good salary and good possibilities to advance in my profession. I chose to live in Albania and not in Italy. At the beginning I have my doubts about this choice, but now I feel happy for having made such a decision. In Italy is a difficult situation because of the economic crisis”.

2. Pull factors

Pull factors are factors in the target country which encourage people to move; these include peace and safety, a chance of a better job, better education, social security, a better standard of living in general as well as political and religious freedom. According to the opinion of the Italian immigrants who participated in this research, have been identified the following pull factors:

a. Low level of expenses for businesses

Here are included low level of taxes, low level of payment for the employed people, low level of bureaucracy comparing to Italy.

M.C., male 50, during a focus group told:

“ If you want to open an activity as entrepreneurs, you have to pay only 300 Euro. Comparing to Italy here is less bureaucracy. And then, looking that the salaries are not too high here in Albania, you pay to an employee a monthly salary of 300-400 Euro and you make him very happy. In Italy nobody can live with such a monthly salary”.

b. Low cost of living

According to the Italian immigrants who participated in this research, the cost of living in Albania is lower, comparing to Italy. This facilitates their decision to live in Albania.

E.C, male 47, during his interview told:

“I work in a call center and I get paid around 600 Euro per month. With this amount of money I make a good life in Albania. In Italy I would need 600 Euro only to pay the rent of the house. Here in Albania for the same reason I pay only 120 Euro”.

c. Positive perception of Albanian people about Italians

M.E, female 43, during her interview told:

“Here in Albania, people love what is “made in Italy”. People have a positive perception about Italians and we do not feel negatively prejudiced by Albanian people. They see us as professionals, as people who bring a good experience, a high human capital and this make us easier to be integrated within the Albanian society”.

3. "Network" factors

As it is explained above, “network” factors include free flow of information, improved global communication and faster and lower cost transportation. While network factors are not a direct cause of migration, they do facilitate it. During their interviews Italian immigrants listed some “network” factors that facilitate their immigration to Albania.

a- Friends and relatives in Albania

Some immigrants told that, their friends experience in Albania served as a positive model and motivated them to immigrate in Albania. It is called “the chain migration”. Chain migration can be defined as a “movement in which prospective migrants learn of opportunities, are provided with transportation, and have initial accommodation and employment arranged by means of primary social relationships with previous migrants.”²⁵

P.M., male 34, during his interview told:

“ A friend of mine came in Albania 6 years ago and opened a restaurant in Durrës. I had regularly contacts with him through skype and mobile and he influenced me to come in Albania and helped me a lot to be arranged here”.

G.B, male, 36, during a focus-group showed:

“My girl friend is Albanian. We knew each-other in Italy, where she was following the Master studies and we decided to live together in Albania. She’s working as a pharmacist and I work as an interior designer and we make a good life here in Albania”.

According to James Coleman, “social capital...is created when the relations among persons change in ways that facilitate action.”²⁶ Douglas Massey, Jorge Durand and Nolan J. Malone apply this theory to chain migration, positing that, “each act of migration creates social capital among people to whom the migrant is related, thereby raising the odds of their migration.”²⁷ In Massey *et al.*’s argument, social capital is the tool by which chain migration occurs. In the context of migration, social capital refers to relationships, forms of knowledge and skills that advance one’s potential migration. Massey *et al.* link their definition to Gunnar Myrdal’s theory of cumulative causation of migration, stating that, “each act of migration alters the social context within which subsequent migration decisions are made, thus increasing the likelihood of additional movement. Once the number of network connections in a community reaches a critical threshold, migration becomes self-perpetuating.”²⁸ Therefore, by initiating small social networks of migration, chain migration becomes a larger mass movement in and of itself.

b- Low cost of transport

The low cost of traveling from Italy to Albania and vice versa, simplifies the immigration of Italians to Albania.

I.G., 41 male, during his interview told:

²⁵John S. MacDonald and Leatrice D. MacDonald (1964). "Chain Migration Ethnic Neighborhood Formation and Social Networks". *The Milbank Memorial Fund quarterly* 42: 82–97. JSTOR 3348581. PMID 14118225.

²⁶James S. Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 304.

²⁷ Douglas Massey Jorge Durand, and Nolan J. Malone (2002). *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in an Era of Economic Integration*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. ISBN 1610443837.

²⁸ Ibid, p.20

“ Traveling with plane is very easy. I reached Albania with only 90 Euro, from “Orio al Serio” Bergamo airport to “Mother Tereza” Tirana airport. The geographical vicinity was favorable on making the decision to immigrate in Albania”.

6. Conclusion

The research showed that the factors which influences the trend of Italian immigration to Albania can be classified as push, pull and network factors. According to the data gathered from the in-depth interviews with Italian immigrants in Albania the global economical crisis is the main push factor, that has strongly influenced the decision of the Italian immigrants to come in Albania. The main pull factors identified from the interviews are: low level of expenses for businesses, which includes low level of taxes, low level of payment of employed people, as well as low level of bureaucracy comparing to Italy; low cost of living in Albania, and positive perception of Albanian people about Italians. Many of Italian immigrants in Albania are “skilled immigrants” who work in the service sector such as medical service, education, food and restaurant service etc. And bring their positive experience in Albania.

The research also showed that some “network” factors influence the decision of Italian immigrants to reach Albania. “Network” factors include free flow of information, improved global communication and faster and lower cost transportation. During their interviews Italian immigrants listed some “network” factors that facilitate their immigration to Albania. The influence of friends and relatives in Albania, as well as low cost of transport have influenced their decision to live in Albania.

The issue of immigration of Italians in Albania seems to be a very interesting issue not only for the sociologist, but even for the policy makers. Studying their integration in Albania is another very important issue that needs to be explored.

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