

Preface

Comparative research on migration is a growing trend in academia. Yet very few studies that compare migrants and their descendants across different sites exist. Study of the integration of the children of migrants—the so-called ‘second-generation’—is itself a recent trend in social science research and migration literature. Their integration is thought to be an important indicator of the degree of integration of immigrants into a specific society. This book offers an in-depth, qualitative analysis of the integration of Albanian migrants and their descendants in Europe. It is also the first full-length comparative study of the Albanian ‘second-generation’. Using a variety of field methods, it compares the ethnic identities, transnational ties and integration pathways of Albanian migrants and Albanian-origin teenagers in three European cities—London, Thessaloniki and Florence—by focusing on inter-generational transmission between the first and the second generation. Greece, Italy and the UK are, in that order, the three main European countries where Albanian migrants have settled during their short but intense migration experience of the past two decades. This book shifts the focus partly to the situation and developments in Southern Europe, where awareness of and interest in issues of integration of the second-generation are still at an early phase. By studying a settling immigrant group and their descendants, this book takes a proactive approach towards the integration of ethnic minorities.

The research involved field work in each of the above-named cities, where quota samples of three categories of informants were drawn for interview: parents, their second-generation teenage children, and teachers and other key informants within the ‘host’ society. Findings show significant differences in integration patterns between the generations, affected by sharp differences between the three contexts and the history of immigration in each context. They also point to important within-group and inter-group differences, based on various socio-economic indicators. Intergenerational transmission appears to be a dynamic process affected not only by context and parents’ socio-economic background, but also by parents’ stage of integration. The two generations prioritize and harness different forms of capital. Nevertheless, capital utilized by parents impacts on the second-generation’s integration because it enables the latter to further harness social and cultural capital; the opposite—lack of such capital—obstructs teenagers’ integration strategies. Mobility and

cosmopolitanism are forms but also ‘outcomes’ of capital, existing and harnessed, which, in the case of the descendants of migrants, displays significant interrelations with power and agency. These interrelations and dynamics are contingent on time and space.

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