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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to confirm that Dr Penelope Papailia's paper entitled 'Projecting places: personal photographs, migration and the technology of (re)location' will shortly appear in the forthcoming volume *Camera Graeca: Photographs, Narratives, Materialities*, published by Ashgate.

Edited by Philip Carabott, Yannis Hamilakis and Eleni Papargyriou, the volume is expected to appear in April 2015.

Yours sincerely,

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(on behalf of the editors)

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Projecting Places:

Personal Photographs, Migration and the Technology of (Re)location*

Penelope Papailias

As rituals of separation and reunion, emblems of distance and memory, tokens of absent others and past places, props for nostalgia and memory and prompts for narratives and self-reflection, photographs and photographic practices have long been a central product of transnational movement and communication, as well as a key element in the symbolic infrastructure of migration. As testimonies to self-fashioning and adventure, records of new selves and new homes, they have figured prominently in diasporic exchanges. Yet, strangely, despite the fact that photographs are often used profusely to *illustrate* accounts of migration, relatively little has been written about the way that photographic practices mediate migration experience.

In this chapter, I will consider how in the mid-2000s Albanian and Bulgarian migrants to Greece located themselves in 'Greece', but also the 'world', through the production, dissemination and collection of personal photographs. The first part of the chapter treats the photograph as a material object and inquires into the role of photographic practices in the constitution of family networks, personal archives and homes-in-migration. The second part looks within the frame of the photograph and considers how subjects placed themselves against particular backdrops as a comment on their relation to the communist past in their home countries, contemporary global consumer society, national ideologies and cultural conventions. This interpellation of the self into public discourse was not an unproblematic gesture, but a site of ambiguity and negotiation, in which the subjectifying and objectifying dynamics of the photograph came into tension.

Finally, I examine how 'Greece' as backdrop in these photographs was visually coded in relation to discourses of global capitalist modernity and staged for re-presentation in the migrants' countries of origin. Focusing on the backdrop, we can see an ongoing negotiation not only of migrants' place in Greece, but also of Greece's place in the world. We have heard much of how Greeks viewed migrants in the 1990s and 2000s, but much less about how migrants themselves saw Greece during this period.

Ethnography in the Photo Album

The corpus of personal photographs discussed in this paper was collected in the context of an interdisciplinary research project carried out between 2004 and 2007 by anthropologists and historians in the Department of History, Archaeology and Social Anthropology at the University of Thessaly. [1] For this project, we documented semi-structured life stories from forty-four Albanian and sixteen Bulgarian migrants then living and working in the coastal city of Volos (population 125,000). This research, which focused on migration and gender, had three central themes: work, historical culture and intercultural communication. In addition to gender, we also considered generation and ethnicity as critical parameters shaping and differentiating migration experience.

The photo project was conceived as a supplement, even a corrective, to the life-story interviews that formed the core of the research. Photographic practice illuminates aspects of gender performativity inaccessible through a logocentric methodology. Feminist and psychoanalytic approaches to film and photography (Mulvey 1975; Doane 1991; Jones 2003) have long drawn attention to the significance of the camera as a cultural apparatus in power-laden processes of objectification and subjectification centering on, and producing, the gendered and racialized body. Indeed it would be impossible to think about the production, reproduction, performance and contestation of gender identity, as well as the dynamics of desire, fantasy, identification and rejection that animate these processes, without reference to practices of looking, the idea of self-image and visual culture more generally. In this respect, personal photographs constitute uniquely rich cultural artifacts, which document how subjects situate themselves over time in relation to normative local poses of gender, sexual and class propriety, as well as in dialogue with global mass media cultural icons. It is these kinds of exercises – a two-pronged process of 'self-distancing', on the one hand, through

projecting oneself (or having oneself projected) into the world of images and 'self-recognition', on the other, involving seeing oneself in the image produced – that define mediation and make it so central to the constitution of subjectivity (Mazzarella 2004). We found that for our interviewees looking at old photographs and juxtaposing them to newer ones led them to historicize gender conventions and reflect on their migration 'makeover' in relation to other aspects of their lives, such as work and consumption.

This historicising potential of the personal photograph made it particularly valuable for our research into historical culture and memory. For one, the ordering and re-ordering of photographs into albums and narratives in itself *enacts* memory, demonstrating how the past is continually repositioned in relation to the present as well as the envisioned, or at least desired, future. We saw this process at work in various sites: in albums made years ago, in albums broken apart to form new image assemblages and, of course, in the photo-narrative co-constructed during the interview itself. Given that the photograph mediates between personal memory and public history, looking at personal photographs also contributed to our research on historical culture (in both the migrants' country of origin and in Greece). As Roland Barthes has pointed out, photography, as a quintessential technology of modernity provided a new way to 'see oneself (differently from in a mirror): on the scale of History' (1981: 12). An example of how photography afforded (or imposed) participation in national historical narratives is the 'ceremonial dress' photograph (Kuhn 1995: 62) taken during state commemorative rituals. The clothes worn (traditional costume, army uniform) in such photographs are always 'greater' than the wearer. The degree to which our interviewees recognized (or *refused* to recognize) themselves in these kind of photographs proved an informative commentary on their relation to national mythologies and social conventions (especially gender roles).

In addition to informing the research more generally, the photo project was conceived as a separate case study within the thematic of 'intercultural communication', which concerned the role of technologies in the formation of transnational networks, the exchange of cultural products and the emergence of new forms of cultural identification. Interview methodology proved particularly limiting for this topic. While questions about communist policies or contemporary work experience prompted elaborate, often impassioned, narratives, asking people about

practices of watching television or the use of cellphones usually resulted in brief responses. The request 'Could you show us and tell us about your photographs?', however, did generate long and lively conversations, especially since our interviewees for the most part had never before shown their photos to acquaintances in Greece. Inquiring into the social contexts of these photographs' production and circulation also provided us with some insight into practices related to photography as a particular kind of cultural technology.

We ended up videotaping a total of six interviews, two of which were conducted with people we had interviewed for the main research project. For these interviews, we deliberately decided to speak with first-generation migrants between thirty and fifty years of age who had memories—and often photographs—from the communist period in their home countries. Thus, we were able to consider continuities and discontinuities in photographic practices between the communist period and the post-communist 'transition', which for most of the interviewees coincided with their migration to Greece. In contrast to the younger generation, people in this age group were in much more frequent contact with family members in their countries of origin, as well as with relatives who had emigrated to other countries. Photographs figured prominently in this communication.

In order to make our interviews more interviewee-, than interviewer-directed, we asked interviewees to select the photographs they wanted to share with us. Given the emphasis of qualitative studies of migration, including our own, on elicited testimony, this approach allowed for a more proactive role on the part of the interviewee. Of course, these were not photo-narratives constructed independently (for instance, for a personal web profile or as part of a cultural association archive), but ones shaped in response to our intervention: that is, by the topics that interviewees thought might interest us and by what they felt comfortable revealing about their personal lives. Yet, the photographs they showed us often led the conversation in directions that we had not thought of proposing. After reviewing the interviews, we selected specific photographs to scan for our archive and to exhibit on the program website paired with extracts from our larger corpus of interviews.[2]

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[2] See, http://gendermigration.ha.uth.gr/el/index.asp. The full archive of photographs and interviews is held by the Laboratory of Social Anthropology, Department of History, Archaeology and Social Anthropology of the University of Thessaly, which has granted permission for the reproduction of the photographs in this article.

I should note that none of the people we interviewed was then using a digital camera or sending images to friends and family electronically through the internet or text messaging. Nonetheless, their photographic practices were prescient of the intense reflexivity of digital late modernity. Topics that have been discussed in relation to online photosharing (Palmer 2010), including the communicative function of the shared photograph, the imperative to document a continuous process of transformation and self-improvement through a visual 'timeline' and the virtuality of the family photo album, prove extremely relevant to the photographic practices of migrants.

Making Place: Network, Archive, Home

When Susan Sontag noted that photographs 'help people take possession of a space in which they are insecure', she referred specifically to the parallel development of photography and tourism (1977: 9). While, as we shall see, the conventions of tourism photography strongly inform migrants' images of Greece, migration creates an unfixing of home and an insecurity of place of a quite different order than tourism. In the context of this more radical relocation, photographs can serve as a fundamental expression of belonging—or of 'longing to belong' (Probyn 1996: 8)—to the new place. At the same time, photographic practices are integral to maintaining connections to people and places in the subjects' past. Much has been written about the connection between writing and exile and the way that writing creates a stage on which the 'I' can move about, but certainly for those 'dwelling-in-travel' (Clifford 1994), the mobility of the photographic archive has rendered it an integral technology of diasporic subjectivity.

This focus on strategies of dwelling and belonging problematizes the overemphasis on mobility, as the opposite of fixity, in studies of globalization and migration. Challenging the notion that 'home' is simply left behind by migrants who exchange a former 'rooted belonging' with a 'rootless mobility', this re-grounding of home—a process of 'homing'— has been identified as a critical component of mobility and one in which much effort, both affective and material, is expended (Ahmed et al. 2003). In our research, photographic practice emerged as a central technology for a kind of cosmopolitan home-making that challenged temporal, spatial and ideological conflations of the home with a physical house or a national homeland

(either of origin or assimilation).

Migrant photographic practices also have the potential to intervene productively in more general theoretical discussions about photography by emphasizing the place-making function of photography and the role of the photograph as a virtual place. Theoretical writings on photography are overwhelmingly focused on time and, thus, on the relation of the photograph to memory, mourning and death. In his influential *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes likens cameras to 'clocks for seeing' (1981: 15): the shutter's click, like a bell, freezes an instant of time, embalming 'life' in preparation for an inevitable death. While Barthes concludes that photographs *block* memory in severing the past from the present instead of making it continuous (1981: 91), other writers whose work I draw on here have examined the photograph's cultural function as an artifact of a past presence centrally entwined in personal and family memory narratives (Kuhn 1995, Hirsh 1997) and material constructions of remembrance (Batchen 2004). Yet, the undeniable centrality of the temporal in discussions of photography overshadows the fact that *spatiality* and the experience of absence through physical separation and distance (not just through death and the passage of time) clearly constitute critical conditioning factors in the making and viewing of photographs.

Given that photographs both negate and underscore distance, they could not but figure prominently in migration experience and in the rituals, as well as the everyday communication, engaged in by transnational networks of friends and family. Indeed, in the context of migration, photographs are often incorporated into other media of deterritorialization, such as letters, e-mails and text messages. As a result, the epistolary aspect of the photograph is heightened in relation to its referential content. As in films made by exiles, which frequently feature letters and telephone calls within their plots, *address* emerges as a central problematic (Nacify 2001: 5, cf. Kunreuther 2006). In other words, from an anthropological perspective, the issue is not just what a particular photograph depicts, but to whom it is addressed and by whom it is viewed.

As we soon learned from our conversations with migrants, the photographs they initially produced in Greece were made with dissemination as a primary motive, not an afterthought. Many described the urgency they felt during their first years in Greece to send photographs back to their families. Cameras were usually one of the first items of technology they secured for themselves in Greece. As opposed to first

televisions, which were often secondhand castoffs, 'inherited' from employers, cameras seemed to be worth buying new. Teuta Sadiku, a forty-year old woman from Albania, told us that within only two or three weeks of her arrival in Greece she and her husband purchased a camera to take photographs to send home so that their families could 'see them'.

The year after he migrated to Greece from Albania, Florin Gjokaj made a photo album in two copies: one to keep for himself and the other to send to his family (Fig. 1). Describing the intense nostalgia he felt at the time, Florin, who was in his mid-thirties when we spoke, explained: 'Those first years, when I left Albania, I felt that I had lost a piece of myself, that I was missing something. I cried so many times… I wanted to send a message up to Albania'. Indeed, in many photographs, Florin seems to be looking beyond the photographer and the in situ audience, addressing imagined viewers back home and infusing the photograph with their ghostly presence. One wonders if in sending the album to Albania, Florin did not also want to insure that *he* was not forgotten: that he could save a place for himself there.

The materiality of the photograph (Edwards and Hart 2004) is integral to its place-making function. As the example of Florin's album suggests, making, bestowing and displaying photographic objects can be a bid to hold a place for an absent other by *taking up* physical—and symbolic—space (propped on a mantel or desk, exhibited on a wall or projected as a 'screensaver'). Given that photographs can publicise a significant, sometimes exclusive, connection to others whom the exhibitor of the photograph does not want to forget (or is not socially allowed to forget), photographs tend to be ritually retrieved from drawers and hard drives (or concealed) when particular visitors show up. Of course, they can also be easily destroyed or simply forgotten. As many commentators have pointed out, photographs, as objects that invoke the absent object of desire, have a talismanic quality and can be emotionally, even erotically, charged markers not only of a past moment, but also of a past presence. This is why photographs, as media that bridge spatial, not only temporal, distance, constitute such salient currency in love affairs.

As Geoffrey Batchen (2004) has shown, photographs as objects and the various other, often incredibly elaborate, objects in which they have been incorporated and conjoined (frames, albums, texts, photo-jewelry, sculptures, fabrics) have often played the role of 'forget me nots' in mourning and mating rituals alike. Photographs can be worn on the body (from the Victorian locket to the wallet insert or

cellphone screen), a fetishistic token that stands in for lovers in their absence.

Batchen (2004: 31) suggests that it is the combination of the haptic and the visual that makes the photograph such a compelling and contradictory form: in the photograph, the fleeting and extraordinary moments, as well as the fantastical reveries, associated with the image acquire a tangibility and presence that can be easily incorporated into the everyday world of the domestic interior. Vaso Skendra, a forty-year old migrant from Albania, for instance, showed us a 1983 picture she had sent to her husband when she first met him. In turn, he had decorated the photograph with a flower decal and written 'my love' on the back. The photographic object as fetish combines the metonymical (the photograph was produced through contiguity with the photograph's subject as light deflected from her/his body entered the camera apparatus) and the metaphorical (the photograph comes to represent that person, like the characteristic photograph of a Hollywood star or the religious icon of a saint), thus potentially acquiring a magical power to protect, as well as a sexual charge (Metz 1985: 86).

In the context of migration and exile, the desire generated by absence often moves beyond the realm of lovers to take on a more 'communitarian' (Nacify 2001) aspect in which longing is expressed toward the family and the nation. Teuta told us that her mother keeps all her old photographs in a big sheet and likes to remind her that 'she has her in there'. As a surrogate for the missing other, the photograph can be gazed at, held, fondled, even kissed: Teuta says her mother opens up the bundle when she is overwhelmed by nostalgia and kisses her daughter's image. During our interview, Burbuqe Durresi, a migrant from Albania in her fifties, kissed a photograph of herself in the coastal town of Saranda, pronouncing 'Saranda, my love'. She also exclaimed 'Hoxha, my love', when we came across a photograph of her standing in front of a monument of the former communist dictator of Albania, Enver Hoxha. In this love affair with the state, Burbuqe might provide an extreme example of the communitarian dimension of diasporic media. She grew up in an orphanage with the state as *de facto* parent; even her name, 'Burbuqe' (blossom) 'Durresi' (after 'Durrës', the city in which she was born) linked her organically to her homeland.

For migrants who had given up on the idea of return—at least in the immediate future—the initial movement of photographs 'up' to Albania tended to be replaced, or at least complemented, by a movement of photographs 'down' to Greece. After a few years in Greece, Florin explained that not only did his nostalgia for

Albania abate, but also during trips back to Albania he felt nostalgic for his life in Greece. He stopped sending photographs home regularly, sensing that these images in which he seemed happy and comfortable in his new surroundings would actually make his parents *lose* hope he might one day return. He never made a second album for his parents and during trips to Albania started to take photos 'back' with him to Greece. Although Teuta initially came to Greece with just a small bag and no photos whatsoever, over time she has brought many photographs to Greece, creating a collection that she tellingly referred to as her 'dowry', underscoring the photographs' value as a marker for social place, gendered propriety and property difficult to maintain or re-establish under conditions of migration.

It might not be an exaggeration to say that 'home' is where one keeps one's photographs. As key components of personal archives (Papailias 2005: 11), photographs-as-objects *make* place. Whether in albums, desk drawers, shoeboxes, or on hard drives and the internet 'cloud', photographs are usually the sentimental cornerstone of these ongoing—and always incomplete—attempts to anchor, if only temporarily, the self somewhere (or in different places) through a process of temporal accumulation, ordering and deletion. For Burbuqe, who has no family to come home to and no current partner or children of her own, photographs formed the carapace of her 'mobile home'. While others talked about photographs as something that they did not think about bringing with them when they first came to Greece, for Burbuqe photographs were among the basic items in her travel bag. As she remarked, 'Wherever I go, I first bring with me my photographs, not even my clothes'. The fact that older female Bulgarian women, who were often in Greece alone working to support children and grandchildren in Bulgaria, did not have with them any, or just a few, old photographs coincided with their firm plans to repatriate.

Although Teuta spoke jokingly of 'stealing' old photographs from her mother's closely guarded collection, she specified that she was taking duplicates. As the quintessential copy-without-original, the photograph, much before the digital age, could be incorporated into different, even conflicting, narratives and archival orders. The double or quadruple copies that photographers routinely gave their customers in communist Albania could even be said to have encouraged dissemination, while migration clearly has provided the impetus for their further geographic dispersion. This sharing of the 'same' photograph, of course, undermines the fiction of the archival original and of a singular physical repository, while creating a virtual third

place—*neither* here nor there.

Rather than positing an ultimate 'home base' for these photographs, it is, thus, more fruitful to focus on their trajectories and the way photographs etch networks of connection (or attest to disconnection) as they move (or not) across borders. In the case of the people we interviewed, this usually was upon the person of a visiting relative or friend, and more rarely in the mail, which was considered unreliable. Vaso showed us a picture of a sister's wedding that she could not attend because she did not then have papers, while Aris Losis, a thirty-year-old migrant from Albania, told us he sent extra copies of the photographs and DVD of his baptism to his family in Albania. Yonka Yankova Nencheva, a fifty-year old woman working in Greece to support her daughter and child back in Bulgaria, was sent photographs from the New Year's celebration in Bulgaria she could not attend because her employers had not paid her Christmas bonus on time (Fig. 2).

This ongoing process of 'seeing and being seen' constitutes a critical means of keeping a dispersed family 'together'. As anthropologist Barbara Wolbert has pointed out in a study of personal photographs of a Turkish migrant family in Germany taken in the 1970s and sent home in letters, the production and viewing of these photographs did not just allow for the virtual reunion of the family, 'rather photography *itself* [was] the *enabler* of the unity in the first place' (Wolbert 2001: 24). Sometimes, the only place in which transnational families separated by migration ever 'meet' is in this photographic traffic. A poignant example also can be found in Greek family collage photographs, which were common in the first part of the twentieth century. In these photographs, individual portraits of family members missing (whether due to migration or death) are affixed to group photos of the rest of the family. In some cases, the youngest children in these family portraits might never have met their older siblings in person. The often glaring signs of collage 'suturing' in these photographs demonstrate the desire to hold together a narrative of family continuity, as much as the reality of separation and of lives lived apart.

Of course, many have argued (Bourdieu 1990; Hirsch 1997, 1999) that photography, which was marketed from the outset as an affordable, easy-to-use technology ideal for documenting and memorializing family life, created the mythologies of the modern middle-class family in the first place. Critical scholarship on family photographs has shown how photographs can be used to identify dominant ideologies of family in different historical and cultural contexts, but also how such

photographs can be read against the grain to reveal 'family secrets' (Kuhn 1995) and track the tensions and resistances to socially prescribed poses and relationships. What diasporic photographic practices potentially add to this discussion, in the pathos with which they expose the family portrait as *fantasy*, is a denaturalizing not just of the patriarchal, heterosexual family (many a family photograph can do this), but also of the physical home (inside the walls of which we are supposedly 'present' to each other) and the homeland (of nation and culture) as necessary preconditions for family.

Indeed, for some of the people with whom we spoke, migration – and with it the chance to construct a personal photographic archive – created the possibility they otherwise might not have had to *sever* their personal histories from limiting, even oppressive, narratives of biological family and national history. The first photograph that Florin showed us was also the first photograph he *chose* to have taken of himself: he remembers that the photographer was reluctant to take the picture because Florin's parents had not contacted him beforehand and he feared little Florin might not pay him. Florin became somewhat flustered later in our conversation when we asked him if he could show us a photograph of his parents. It soon became clear that he had not brought such photos 'down' to Greece. He also had not brought photographs of himself as a baby or young child objectified by the parental gaze. The life narrative he unfolded for us through his photo album was one of self-becoming, not anchored to a 'family frame' (Hirsch 1997), but a bachelor's story centered on relations with friends and lovers, thus, defying the notion often treated as a default in studies of migration that the family forms the 'primordial ethnic network' (Fortier 2000: 4). Self-focused migrant image assemblages such as Florin's, in fact, resonate with contemporary practices of online image culture that emphasize the constant 'updating' of a personal 'profile'. At the same time, a lack of sentimentality about origins does not negate a future desire for home and family (whether these are ultimately reproduced or re-imagined in relation to personal and national histories). What is certain is that the play of personal photographs, their orderings and re-combinations, their circulation and exhibition, their viewing and handling, is a critical site to trace this process.

Up to this point I have treated the photograph as an exteriority (of accumulation and exchange), focusing on place in terms of materiality and relatedness. Now I want to turn to the internal landscapes and settings depicted in the photographs themselves to consider place in relation to national culture and geographies of modernity.

A Place in the World: Being Modern after (and during) Communism

A particularly incisive strand of anthropological research on post-colonial photographic practice (Pinney 1997; Poole 1997; Strassler 2010) has brought into focus the importance of backdrops in locating the photographed subject in relation to power and capital. Due to the focus on the subaltern, this research has demonstrated a particular sensitivity to the tension between the subjectifying and objectifying functions of photography: namely, the way subjects are placed by others or place themselves before the lens in particular defining contexts. In these studies, there is a tendency to trace a historical trajectory from the colonial period, in which the bodies of the colonized were 'framed' and 'captured' by the coercive gaze of colonial power and inscribed as ethnological and regional 'types' by discourses of ethnographic realism, to a post-colonial situation in which the formerly colonized voluntarily use photographic technology to project themselves into the visual narrative of the new nation and, by extension, into global modernity.

An important contribution of this research is its problematization of photographic realism: rather than fixing the subject in time and place, photographic backdrops – properly-appointed bourgeois living rooms, monumental buildings, dramatic physical landscapes, airplane cockpits – can tell us about where the subject might *like* to be (or 'play' at being). Given that these backdrops frequently express a desire for class advancement, material enrichment and technological progress, the personal photograph, as Arjun Appadurai (1997) has noted, often serves an important role in placing the subject not so much in a physical geography, as in the 'discourse of modernity as a visual fact'.

Turning to the photographs from our corpus with these thoughts in mind, there are at least two ways to think about subjects' placing. First, one can look at these photographs specifically as photographs of 'migrants'—the quintessential subjects of both the *repressive* and the *honorific* functions of photography famously described by Allan Sekula (1986). Migrants' mobility, their anomalous appearance in someone else's territory, their economic vulnerability and their relative degrees of visible racial or cultural 'difference' have typically rendered them 'problematic', if exotic, bodies and, thus, predictable targets for surveillance and visual objectification by the police, social welfare agents, journalists and ethnographers. At the same time, migrants themselves use photography to document, their upward class movement, as well as

their successful cultural assimilation. They actively offer themselves up to the camera, seeking out the social alchemy of the photographic portrait.

I will not be able to elaborate further here on how this dual dynamic was at work in the photographs we were shown, except to make a few brief points. The photographs in the corpus were personal, not public photos, so needless to say the 'honorific' dimension dominated over the 'repressive' one, except in a few rare photographs taken by employers that seemed to put migrants 'in their place' (that is, at work). In their own photographs, scenes of labour are rarely depicted. There is little to identify these photographs as 'migrant photos', with the exception of those taken at cultural association events. Cognizant of the way that photographic practices sugarcoat the past, one woman from Bulgaria who initially showed us her photographs decided not to let us scan or display them because she said that they made it look as though she had enjoyed her time in Greece.

The second aspect of placing that is pertinent to this corpus of photographs and will be the focus of the rest of this chapter involves their role in placing the subject vis-à-vis global capitalist modernity during both the communist period and the so-called 'transition' to post-communism. While, as is recorded in many of the photographs, this process of self-interpellation into capitalist modernity clearly predated migration, given our focus on historical culture, we were particularly interested in how that past was re-viewed from the perspective of life in Greece after communism, as well as how that past affected migrants' views of Greek modernity. Teuta, with her photos spread before her at the start of the interview, remarked: 'Whatever photos are without colour are from the old days'. In this 'black-and-white' Albania, lovers' practice of exchanging photographs with amorous messages written on the back, as late as the 1980s, might appear as a testament to the 'out-of-sync' youth culture of communist Albania. Yet, interventions on the backdrop – notably the hand-colouring of photographs – revealed a keen sense of this belated modernity and a desire for cultural acceleration. In hand-coloured photographs of Burbuqe in her bikini from 1972 and of Florin with his classmates in 1990, which he coloured himself, what is conveyed is a sense not only that the photographed subjects feel modern in a backward country and want to see themselves as modern in the photographs produced, but also that in the very performance of these photographic acts they are *introducing* modernity to the particular social context.

For instance, objects emblematic of consumer society and contemporary

technology often appear as props in migrants' photographs from Albania: as metonyms for technological progress, capitalist exchange and new consumer tastes, but also as evidence of a cosmopolitanism and knowledge of the world beyond the tightly-guarded borders of the Albanian state. In Florin's hand-coloured photograph from his student days, he and his classmates hold out Albanian banknotes (*lek*). In another picture, a long-haired Florin and his girlfriend pose with a bottle of a local 'Cola'. For her part, Burbuqe, who at the time got around on a bicycle, liked to *pose* with various motorized vehicles. We should not forget that photographs themselves were commodities and a small luxury under communism: Burbuqe told us she spent all her allowance from the orphanage on photographs that she had taken during short periods of free time outside the institution.

Unsurprisingly, the move to Greece and to an apparently more 'advanced' capitalist economy is initially documented in these photographs through a visual discourse on objects. New clothes are a recurring theme: in the first days after his arrival, Aris is pictured posing in the heavy metal T-shirt he bought at a summer fair, while Teuta noted that in a photograph taken in the Volos port she is wearing a new dress bought in Greece, but that her watch is from Albania. As opposed to seeing the imaginative dimension of photography as a 'resistance to the real,' as Appadurai (1997) has argued, it might be more useful to consider the *complementarity* of documentary realism and fantasy. The reality effect of the photograph makes the pose credible and the change of 'skin' real.

The documentary function of the photograph, though, also seemed to be used retrospectively to expose the staged backdrop as a ruse and relic of the communist past. While Aris had a picture from his first days in Greece showing him reaching up to take an object from a well-stocked supermarket shelf, he also had a picture of himself walking home, carrying bulging supermarket bags, proof that he actually could – and did – purchase goods there (Fig. 3 a & b). While Burbuqe once *posed* with a motorbike, Vaso and her family now *have* one, not to mention a car – and photos to prove it. Photographs could even serve as a return on investments— evidence that money did not disappear into thin air. After sending a baby carriage to her daughter in Bulgaria with a transport service, Yonka received photographs in the mail of her grandson and of the New Year's celebration she missed. When researchers visited Yonka's home in Bulgaria, her son gave them a pack of photographs to give to his mother in Greece depicting appliances purchased with money she had sent. It

would be misleading, though, to suggest that migration and the move into a capitalist context led unproblematically to the fulfilment of what under communism were once just fantasies of consumer acquisition.

Indeed, some migrants with whom we spoke openly expressed their reservations about Greece's modernity. Negatively impressed when he arrived in Greece with images from American movies in his head, Aris's first reaction was: 'They're kidding us' (*plaka mas kanoun*). Aris had explained to us that he would have begun university the same year he emigrated if he had not been pushed by others to emigrate. He added that no one in his circle was even talking about going to Greece, but only to countries such as Germany. Referring to the heavy metal T-shirt from the fair, he made clear that he already knew about trends in heavy metal music when he was living in Albania and continued to follow them in Greece, thus identifying himself with global music culture. Florin, in an earlier interview, told us about summer conversations back in Albania with relatives who had migrated to other countries. While he was clear about where Greece stood relatively speaking in the global order of things, he claimed to prefer its less intensive form of capitalism.

'Greece' on the Backdrop

While the activist, the journalist or the anthropologist might seek to document, visually or otherwise, the exploitation and violent treatment of migrants, those who have undergone the experience of migration usually do not picture their experience using the visual tropes of 'migrant' or 'refugee' documentary photography, but rather those of picturesque travel and tourist image-making: the ultimate badge of the upwardly mobile subject. In the early days of Albanian migration to Greece in the 1990s, Greeks used to refer jokingly to the Albanian migrant as an 'Albanian tourist' (*Alvanos touristas*). For those who had been relatively privileged subjects in communist Albania, though, this term actually came close to describing how they saw themselves.

Many of the migrants who shared photographs with us viewed, or forced themselves to view, migration right from the start through the lens of earlier travel experiences and as a continuation, not a rupture, in the construction of their personal album. Especially for those who had grown up in cities, studied at university and whose families had 'clean' political records, there had been ample opportunity to travel around the country in organized school or youth groups, as well as to attend

summer camps. Florin, who had many photographs with him in Greece from trips he had taken in Albania with his college classmates from Elbasan, regretted that he did not have any pictures from his very first days in Greece, when he had worked picking peaches in the northern city of Veria. In the album he sent back to his family, Florin, who crossed the Greek-Albania border on foot, re-presents migration as an adventurous journey with ample opportunities for male bonding and the performance of rugged masculinity. Burbuqe clearly brought along with her to Greece the panorama landscape aesthetic cultivated during her travels through communist Albania: the bikini beach pose found in her photographs from summer camps in Albania recurs in images taken during beach breaks from her job as a maid in a Greek hotel (Fig 4 a & b).

This recasting of migration experience as tourism meant recasting foreignness as asset, not stigma, thus countering the cultural hierarchies of Greek public discourse of the 1990s and 2000s that placed Albanians and Bulgarians low down on the ladder of nationalities. Vaso, for instance, showed us a picture of herself with her children in front of the Hilton hotel from a trip taken to Athens to arrange the family's identification papers (Fig. 5). Indicative of this reframing of migration in terms of tourism and, by extension, as participation in—not exclusion from—a cosmopolitan consumer culture, she noted: 'Everyone there (at the Hilton) was speaking a foreign language and so were we'.

Over time, the photo albums of the people with whom we spoke have been filled with photographs from actual vacations: pictures from beach holidays and excursions throughout Greece. Many also spoke about feeling like tourists on return trips to Albania. Aris posed in a photo with his family in front of a historical monument in Avlona as if he were a first-time visitor to the city. The transformation of Albania into a landscape of memory and nostalgia, as well as of pristine nature, cultural authenticity and the national historical past could be seen in Florin's photographs of Albania, especially one in which he is pictured in the river where he used to play as a boy. That in this photograph he is in the company of (today's) village boys illustrates the extent to which Albania has become for him a topos of the past. Indeed, one of the only pictures that visibly upset him was a photo of a new house that he said he does not know why he started building in Albania.

As migrants turned into *Greek* tourists, needless to say, the image of Greekness that was semiotically constructed in the backdrop of personal photographs

became more complex. As a premier twentieth-century global summer tourist destination, Greece was initially integrated into migrants' personal photographs through well-established codes of Western postcard representations of Greece. Aris, for instance, admitted that most of the photographs he sent to his friends and family in Albania were taken by the sea. Volos does not have any notable antiquities (the other dominant visual sign of Greece), so the city's port also was a popular backdrop in others' photos, particularly early ones. However, as the Albanian migrants with whom we spoke gradually turned from travelers into *residents* of Greece, the backdrops of their photos took on more national connotations, which in the Greek context has prominent religious (Orthodox Christian) dimensions. Looking across their photographs, this lived 'Greece' had certain recurring visual motifs: Easter celebration, Orthodox baptism, sports teams and, above all, the Greek flag.

Photographic backgrounds, thus, served as a central device for working out national and cultural identifications and expressing a sense of belonging (or the longing to belong). While Vaso, for instance, showed us a photograph in which she serves her family the traditional Albanian New Year's meal, many photographs that we were shown depicted rituals of the Greek Orthodox calendar. There were, for instance, abundant pictures of Easter celebrations depicting the migrants themselves (regardless of their faith) eagerly turning the lamb on the spit and feasting with friends (Fig. 6 a & b). However, given the salience of religion as a marker of Greekness, but also as a practical mode of integration into local social networks, several of the Albanian migrants with whom we spoke, whose families in Albania were not of Orthodox background (i.e. Muslim or Catholic) or who had not been baptised due to the official atheism of the communist state, eventually decided to be baptised or to baptise their children Greek Orthodox. Photographs from these ceremonies were prominent in personal photo collections. This use of photographs as a document of cultural passing also was evident in photographs taken of children dressed in Greek national costume and holding Greek flags at school celebrations (Fig. 7). Vaso showed us a picture of her son's birthday party featuring a cake decorated with the insignia of the AEK football club and an AEK wall banner.

Images with flag backdrops, though, often turned out to be more ambiguous than one might have expected and a site in which theoretically conflicting national and cultural identities actually could be reconciled. Juxtaposed Greek and Albanian flags, a standard backdrop at events of the local Albanian cultural association,

simultaneously honour and undermine the exclusivist logic of national identification. Yet, even apparently mono-national backdrops could be interpreted in intercultural terms: Aris told us that the two-headed eagle he chose for his soccer team's uniforms did not just index the Albanian flag, but the Greek football team AEK as well.

Photographs also were used to *appropriate* spaces indifferent or hostile to migrants' presence and, in this way, forcefully to claim place. They did not interpellate their subjects into public discourse in Althusserian (1971) terms: this was not a 'hailing' out of invisibility and into subjecthood *as a migrant* by a police officer's abrupt 'Hey, you there', but a self-recognition and claim to belonging in Greece—something that proved intimately related to having belongings, especially property. As we looked through her photos, Burbuqe exclaimed: 'Me, me everywhere.' In contrast to the disdain she expressed for her own small home in Saranda, which she described as the city's eyesore, she proudly showed us pictures of herself (often posing with guests) at a Greek hotel where she had worked, commenting repeatedly: 'Hotel mine' (*xenodoheio diko mou*). The Bulgarian woman who did not allow us to scan her photographs had a whole series in which she had posed herself in different rooms of her employer's house, while Yonka showed us a picture of herself and her Bulgarian friends having a private celebration in the home of the employer of one of her friends.

Photographs, of course, also frequently serve as backdrops themselves. In one of Teuta's photographs from her wedding day, a portrait of Enver Hoxha can be discerned on the wall. Teuta explained that her father, a staunch Party loyalist, also had hung up portraits of Stalin, Lenin, Engels and, briefly, Mao. He even replaced a photograph of his mother that once hung on the wall with one of Ramiz Alia, Hoxha's successor. With the fall of communism, Teuta and her sister used the opportunity of a paint job to remove the portraits of these political patriarchs: her father, though, complained afterwards that they had forgotten to decorate the house (*giati den stolisate to spiti*). Today, the only photograph hanging on the wall of Teuta's family house is that of her now deceased father: a large colour photograph of him she had made in Greece from a small black-and-white print.

Of course, the 'transition' from communism should not be understood as a liberation from political iconography, leading to a return to a private world of images. As I have suggested, public discourses of visuality, whether those related to the patriarchal, heteronormative family or national-religious culture, certainly continued

to inform the backdrops of photographs, as well as the use of photographs as backdrops. When we noticed religious icons on the wall in a photograph of her son in his crib in Greece, Teuta remarked that the icons were a present from her son's godmother. Discreetly, without openly identifying (and rejecting) this gift as a form of cultural imposition, Teuta went on to note that she herself preferred more childish decorations and had replaced the icons some years later, only to have her children complain that she had not decorated the house as it had been before.

Epilogue

Photographic practices do not so much document migrant experience as mediate that experience through the double process of projection and recognition through which subjectivities and collectivities emerge and morph (Mazzarella 2004). The pose before the camera, the circulation of photographs, the making of an album, the telling of a story around a photograph—these performative acts do not simply record experience, but *are* experience. As artifacts produced, gathered, dispersed, copied, lost and destroyed in the process of moving between places and cultures, photographs are integral, not incidental, to an ongoing process of (re)location and self-composition during migration. Despite the use of analogue technology, the epistolary quality of migrants' photographic practices, the virtualization of 'home' they enact and the imperative to 'update' they reveal prefigure digital photosharing and profile culture. That this would be the case is not surprising given that in late modernity elements of the migration experience have become generalized as people undergo frequent changes in jobs, spouses, religion, culture and politics without necessarily moving to another country. That this kind of home-making was dynamic and flexible, challenging both the idea that mobility is antithetical to 'rooting' and the identification of 'home' with a singular, physical location (house) and with a cultural past tense (homeland), does not mean that these practices were progressive in a political sense: photography's 'magic' could bridge the contradictions and gaps in narratives, rather than expose them as a way to begin an explicit rethinking of ideological presuppositions (relatedness, gender roles, ethnic reproduction) associated with the idea of home.

The photographic backdrop of migrants' personal photographs also turned out to be a complex site in which multiple identifications and kinds of belonging were worked out. As a form of self-interpellation, placing oneself in different settings could

be an affectively charged mode of seeing oneself as 'part of the picture'— whether of global modernity and consumer culture, or of Greek society as a national-cultural context. At the same time, these images could reveal that integration as nothing but a wilful projection, haunted by the objectifying gaze of those attempting to put migrants 'in their place' in the global labour market and in Greek society. Given the imaginative dimension of the backdrop, though, it could also be used strategically and ironically as a device of cultural passing that enabled the migrant subject to get by and avoid or resist actual affiliation. While visiting Greece as a tourist destination is an incontrovertible testament to achieving the status of the modern consumer, *residing* in Greece could have the opposite effect. Contrary to hegemonic Greek narratives of cultural superiority vis-à-vis migrants, as well as the assumed teleology of migration as a process of enlightenment through acculturation, migrants as cosmopolitan citizens of photography might imagine themselves as bringing modernity with them and perhaps at some point moving on.

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