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**Gender and sexual identity, ethnicity and austerity:  
exploring family housing support in contemporary Greece**

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Αχ Ελλάδα σ' αγαπώ  
και βαθιά σ' ευχαριστώ  
γιατί μ' έμαθες και ξέρω  
ν' ανασαίνω όπου βρεθώ  
να πεθαίνω όπου πατώ  
και να μη σε υποφέρω

Nikos Papazoglou  
(rendition), Manolis Rasoulis  
(lyrics)

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## ABSTRACT

Family support for housing is a strong cultural and economic feature of Southern European and especially Greek culture and welfare state. Thanks to this support, people, and especially the younger family members, are able to achieve housing solutions that they would not be able to sustain otherwise. The acceptance, nevertheless, of this support creates obligations and power relations that can lead to control from the family over the receiver's life choices. This work aims to cover some of the multiple dimensions of this support, focusing especially on the support provided to younger family members and the family housing strategies.

The dissertation is constituted of 4 chapters/papers with each of them investigating a different dimension of the family housing support: gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity/transnationality and austerity impact.

Firstly, the dissertation focuses on the way the receiver's gender identity affects the type of family support that is destined for him/her. The differentiated types of support refer to different perceived gender roles between men and women. These roles are in such a degree self-evident in Greek culture that is hard for the people themselves to distinguish them as gendered. However, by investigating the housing pathways of young people, the differences arise that are connected with different imaginaries of the gender obligations towards family and society.

Furthermore, the impact of non-heteronormative sexual orientation is explored. In Greece, LGBTQ+ are still in a precarious social position as society is conservative, (heteronormative) family-centric and strongly religious. Because of this, it is urgent to investigate how housing support and their housing practices are impacted, directly and indirectly by their sexual identity.

Concerning the ethnic dimension, the family's housing strategies are investigated in connection to the transnationalism and cultural characteristics of people born in Albania. This social group is regarded as the most appropriate to be researched in the Greek territory as they constitute the most integrated migrant group that is evident also in their housing practices. Simultaneously, it is explored whether the Albanian and Voreioipiotes<sup>1</sup> culture is similar to the one of the country of destination, Greece. Some of the main cultural similarities include the significance of the family, home and the act of hosting. Do these similarities create intra-familial obligations and power relations that may allow family control over the receiver's life choices?

The ability of family to support its members is expected to be diminished and the family housing strategies to be burdened by the global financial crisis and the related austerity

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<sup>1</sup> This ethnic group is recognized officially from the Albanian state as Greek National Minority of Albania.

measures that are imposed in Greece. The people that are employed in the local economy are facing financial difficulties while the already weak welfare state is being shrunk even more. However, by researching the crisis impact on family support, the 'cultural obligation' of the family seems to be still stronger; The family struggles even harder to support its members although its housing strategies may have been cancelled. Usually, both the receiver and the giver have to compensate with solutions that are not favourable and can be even suppressive, striving to survive the economic downturn.

The parameters investigated in the present research are only some of the existing ones that should be researched in order to visualize the multi-dimensional impact of this cultural and financial "habit" of housing support from the family. The drawbacks of this self-evident support have to be acknowledged and criticized to promote both critical understanding and active engagement as well as the demand for appropriate housing and social policies.

## INTRODUCTION

The concept of home is an emotive and powerful idea, one which is strongly associated with the institution of family (Duncan & Lambert, 2004). The bond between home and family is undeniable, especially in the Greek context. *Ikoyenia*, which means family in Greek, is derived from two words: *oikos* (house) and *yenia* (generation) (Iossifides, 1991; Paxson, 2004). This etymology testifies to the geographic location of the family inside the house. There is the perception that a house only becomes a home when it is occupied by a family, thereby excluding other types of occupants. In this work, the two interconnected concepts will be discussed.

## HOME

Home is a strong and multidimensional concept, one which encompasses not only the basic need for a place to live in, but also a social imaginary and mental state. The concept, however, is neither fixed nor universal, as it is impacted by local cultures, places, spaces, scales, identity and power (Blunt & Dowling, 2006). Additionally, home represents both a means of self-fulfillment and a social challenge for the families which are expected to take care of the housing needs of their members. Moreover, home is a personal idea, one which is impacted by the experiences of each person but also by the specific time that he/she inhabits it. 'Home' also indicates one's psychological bond with a house and its features, such as its location and neighbourhood, as well as the supportive social networks established in the area.

On the other hand, these features can present dangers, and in such cases the home becomes akin to a prison – a site of suppression. Accordingly, it constitutes the epicentre of life events and everyday practices that can either promote security and warmth or constrain the agency of its occupants (Brickell, 2012). Of course, it is also the site in which household members establish their family relationships and identities; in that sense, the home represents a 'collective emotional and financial project' (Forrest, 1995, 4) undertaken within a 'matrix of relations, personal meanings and emotional attachments' (Gorman-Murray, 2008, 32). Gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, class and many other factors profoundly impact the experience of home and shape one's home imaginary. Concerning gender, for example, the home is the primary site for the reproduction of gender roles and relations as well as for their transformation (Duncan & Lambert, 2004). Delegated roles exist for all family members, especially in heteropatriarchal families. Inside the conventional homes, heteronormativity is deeply naturalised, which in turn imposes heteronormative behaviours. In this respect, the home is not just an arena in which family members interact,

but also a nexus at which family ambitions and obligations are imposed, ‘individual biographies and expectations are routed’ and the ‘emotional functioning of the family is often played’ (Valentine, Skelton & Butler, 2003, p.481).

Family homes<sup>2</sup> in particular act as sites for the imposition of ideals, rules and primary societal behaviors; indeed, even when younger people move out, their childhood home remains a reference point for their personality and identity and defines their housing biographies. At home, people create their identities under the umbrella of prevailing social and power relations (Gorman–Murray, 2008c). Simultaneously, the family home is a spatial expression of family identities and member interactions, which, in the context of Southern Europe, comprises an asymmetrical heteropatriarchal structure with accordant social roles and relations (Valentine, 1993). Conversely, the family home also constitutes a key site to challenge hegemonic social identities and develop unique identities.

## **FAMILY**

Family, is ‘a social institution [...] a stable network of relationships between (socially defined) roles, a summary of customized roles of personal and/or collective action’ (Mousourou, 1993, 14). Even today, this is the way family is taught in the social sciences in Greek universities. And at the national level, ‘The family, being the cornerstone of the preservation and the advancement of the Nation, as well as marriage, motherhood and childhood, shall be under the protection of the State’, according to Article 21 of the Constitution of the Republic of Greece (In the name of the Holy and Consubstantial and Indivisible Trinity) – this phrase is still present in the Greek Constitution and shows how important family is not just in terms of the state but also to the church that supports this institution insofar as it reinforces their power.

Family is the core, the essence and the main pillar of functionality of the Greek state as a powerful and persistent welfare agent. ‘Familistic welfare capitalism’, the welfare regime of this region, can be observed in the eminent role played by the family in most activities that, elsewhere, are managed by the market, such as the real estate sector (Papadopoulos & Roumpakis, 2013). It also constitutes a regulatory system, one which is imposed in society to secure people’s social integration and acceptance and to provide them with a desirable ‘fair way of achieving socially acceptable and/or desirable personal but also collective goals’ (Mousourou, 1993, 14). These simple definitions, customised especially for Southern Europe and particularly for Greece, express the public imaginary regarding family.

The members of the family moreover, are expected to be united, sharing common goals and obligations and abiding by specific social and gender roles. Among these goals are housing strategies that evoke collective desires and foster family support, but they also create binding situations. People who cannot or choose not to satisfy their social roles face

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<sup>2</sup> The term *family home* replaced parental house order to ‘capture the multifaceted and intimate interconnections between self, siblings and parents [...] including ‘step’ (or ‘social’) relatives as well’ (Gorman-Murray, 2008a, p.42).

consequences in terms of the family support they receive: 'The more traditional the society, the more rigid the roles' definition [...] thus the more unpleasant the impact for the person who, from need or will, differs' (Mousourou, 1993, 16).

However, there has been concern that families are in decline (Valentine, Skelton & Butler, 2003) due to individualisation in connection with neoliberalism, which emphasises self-fulfillment, mobility and autonomy, thereby weakening the family's power. Nevertheless, there is evidence that only family formation processes are changing, whereas the significance of the institution itself has remain unaffected (Valentine & Hughes, 2011). Accordingly, during the current financial crisis, brought on by austerity and the inadequacy of the welfare state, the main pillar of Greek society, family, has retained its power and hegemony over its dependent members. This is because the family is a relatively stable formation that can support citizens and even provide them with housing solutions, though these are not always favourable like inter-generational cohabitation, dependent living arrangements, non-desirable properties or neighbourhoods. The family, "invested by the power" of the main welfare agent of the Greek state, is entitled to monitor its members and determine whether their life choices are acceptable. Therefore, since many young people depend on family-based assistance, their lives and housing pathways are most often prescribed by family expectations and relations, not by their own desires and needs.

## **CLASS AND FAMILY**

Concerning class, the investigation of it for young people is implicated as parents and other family members are supporting the young members reinforcing them with middle class advantages even if they or their family do not belong to this class (Heath&Calvert, 2013). Parents tend to invest in their children social and financial upward mobility and housing security. They expect in return that their children will realize their parents' ambitions which normally consist of the latter's unrealized personal dreams for social mobility (Valentine, Skelton & Butler, 2003). Therefore, even if their parental family is of a lower class, the children and in particular the millennials that are investigated here, experienced a household of a higher economic class. Simultaneously, all around Europe social class is associated with homeownership with Greece as an exception, where homeownership was socially diffused (Filandri & `Olagnero, 2014).

However, there is evidence that the crisis reached citizens who were considered to be economically secure (Zambarloukou, 2015). The middle class, which in the beginning of the 2008 crisis comprised 70,8% of the population, in four years' time reached a percentage of 54,2% (Daskalopoulou, 2016). The families that maintain their assets can adopt in a better way and support their members while the ones that lost them or never had them are struggling to make ends meet. There were also incidents encountered where upper class families and especially businessmen/businesswomen, due to the fact that they were taking more risks, were struck worse by the crisis and were left even without any asset to support their family with.

The rest of the introductory chapter is structured as such: First, the case studies, their relevance and the main and partial research questions are demonstrated followed by a detailed section for the characteristics of the research partners. Afterwards, the methodology is presented concerning the methods chosen as well as the ethics and positionality in the present work. There is also a section about the structure of the work and the existing bibliography as well as the research gaps which constitute another section. The last part deals with the collaborations and the paper's publication progress.

## **FOUR PERSPECTIVES, THEIR RELEVANCE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This dissertation deals with the examination of four different dimensions of family support in housing for younger people in Athens, Greece. Each paper also centers on a different social group or subject: young highly-skilled professionals, craftsmen, members of the LGB+ and Albanian immigrants in Greece. Accordingly, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity/origin and the ongoing financial crisis are investigated in the context of housing and housing practices. Correspondingly, the four cases are titled:

1. Keeping the children close and the daughters closer. Is family housing support in Greece gendered? (Gender dimension)
2. When housing is provided, but only if you remain in the 'closet'. The impact of sexual identity on housing practices for LGBTQ+ Greek people. (Sexual orientation dimension)
3. 'Shpi and 'Spiti. Transnational housing pathways of emigrant Albanian families in Greece. Migration, housing and culture. (Ethnic dimension)
4. The ongoing role of family in the provision of housing in Greece during crisis. (Austerity impact)

In this way, it was hoped that light could be shed on family housing support, which is an integral characteristic of Southern European, particularly Greek, familistic society and culture. Such support was shown to be the result of family strategies that impact the lives and housing pathways of family members.

Initially, in my PhD research I intended to investigate the class dimension of housing practices in relation to family support mechanisms. Thus, I also included, during data collection, information regarding the class background of my research partners and their immediate family. However, when I concluded the interviews with the first groups (the manual workers and the high-skilled professionals) which would have constituted the "sample" of this particular work, I decided not to pursue the issue of class any further. The reason was that during the narration of the housing pathways my research partners did not

mention systematically any class issue and there were not significant differences in the housing practices/pathways of the two groups. Obviously, there exists a class dimension in housing choices/pathways (Forrest, 2013) and this is well established through quantitative research (e.g. Emmanuel, 1981) but this was not noticeable in the narrations during this research. Therefore, and in connection to the fact that the financial crisis and especially austerity measures were mentioned more often, I chose to shift my focus to the impact of the latter on housing practices/pathways. Hopefully class dimension can be investigated in the same or a wider group during a future research.

The specific researched aspects were chosen in connection to the nature of Greek family, society and economy; the Greek family is patriarchal and still conservative enough, so I wish to explore the impact of gender and sexual orientation on the support they offer regarding these categorical identities of the receivers. Moreover, Albanians in Greece seem to employ similar family strategies concerning housing provision for the family, thus this social group was also investigated to research their housing strategies in connection to family and gender roles. Last but not least, financial downturn is a reality for Greece in the last 10 years but the family is still strong enough to offer relief from its impact on its members. The austerity dimension thus was another natural aspect to be investigated as it represents in a way the time specificity of this research, an era of austerity and financial difficulty with an impact on housing.

<b>Main research question:</b> How Gender, Sexual Identity, Ethnic culture and Austerity impact the family housing support to its members?	
<b>Partial research questions</b>	<b>Research Objectives</b>
How does the local culture impact housing practices and family housing strategies? (papers 1, 2, 3)	Showing the cultural impact on housing practices and strategies.
How does the gender of the receiver differentiate the family housing support? (paper 1, 2)	Explaining the ways that housing support is customized in relation to the gender of the receiver.
How does the gender of a person affects his/her housing practices in connection to his/her intra-familial role? (paper 1, 3)	Elucidating the impact of gender role on the housing choices of a young person in connection to obligations/benefits from the family.
What is the impact of crisis and austerity on the family strategies towards housing? (papers 1, 4)	Investigating the impact of economic downturn through the housing pathways of young people.
How does transnationalism impact the housing practices and family strategies? (paper 3)	Researching the transnational housing strategies of the family and the plans of provision for its members in both countries.
How does family deals with the housing distress of its members? (paper 3, 4)	Exploring how family members' housing difficulties are faced collectively by the family with specific strategies.

TABLE 1. Main and partial research questions and objectives of the dissertation.

## RESEARCH PARTNERS, TIME AND PLACE

To recruit interview participants, snowball sampling was used from multiple sources to arrange 45 semi-structured, biographical interviews with people aged 27–34 years old; another 7 older and younger participants provided background stories. The social background of the participants varies greatly in terms of the socioeconomic class of their families, family forms, educational backgrounds and working status.

None of the participants belonged to an overburdened household and there were not incidents of homelessness, extreme housing or energy poverty even though they originated from households of different socioeconomic classes. However, 40% of Greek households was over-indebted already in 2016 (Siatitsa&Annunziata, 2017). In particular, a lot of the Greek participants have at least one parent employed in the public sector and especially education (50% of the high skilled professionals research partners). This is not at all irrelevant as the Greek public sector before crisis, offered permanent positions with security, stable salary and “efapax,” which is a summary of part of the salary that was detained as long as they were working received after the retirement. Based on this money their family strategies were structured concerning among others their housing solutions. This allowance is also mentioned a lot from the participants as it is crucial for the housing practices.

The participants are regarded as ‘young people’ in this specific research context, as youth is typically constructed according to geographical and cultural contexts. Therefore, even though youth studies in Northern Europe posit youths as being between 15 and 24 (Evans, Holt & Skelton, 2017), this age bracket was not adequate in the Mediterranean context of this project. In Southern Europe, the process of education is typically longer, and most Southern Europeans leave their parental home at the age of 29, which is older than in the rest of Europe. This older age is also related to the age at which most people marry, which is typically older than in Northern Europe (Serracant, 2015; Gentile, 2015; Arundel & Ronald, 2015; Minguez, 2016). This work focused on young people that have finished their education and have progressed to the labour market and financial autonomy. Scholars who have focused on youths in Southern Europe use various age ranges in their studies: Naldini and Jurado: 25–34 (2013); Ministerio di Vivienda: 22–29 (2010); Moreno and Mari-Klose: 18–34 (2013); Mínguez: 18–34 (2016); Bricocoli and Sabatinelli: 18–32 (2016). Following these indications, the definition of the age group for the specific research was set as young people from 27 to 34 years old.

Even though the number of participants itself is quite small, and it is not my purpose to generalize, the level of detail provided by the biographic interviews enabled me to analyse many housing practices and family housing support episodes. Thus, the existing number of

life stories may be equated to much larger surveys that focus only on participants' current episodes of housing support (see also May, 2000; Randall, 1992).

The respondents belong to four social groups that may have participants in common, as demonstrated by the figure below.

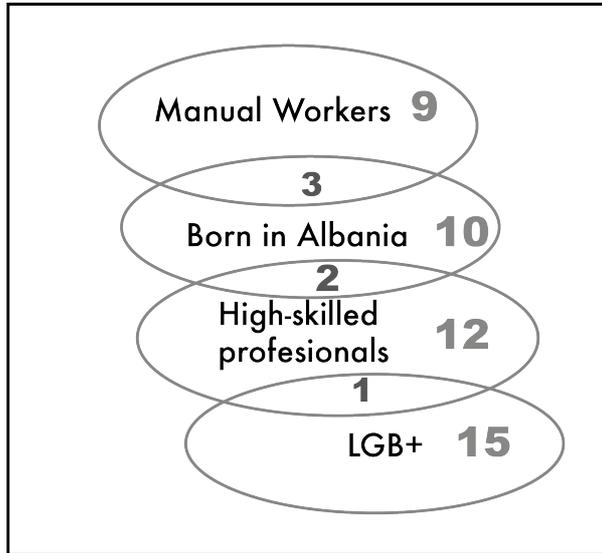


FIGURE 1: Participants' groups' intersections. The numbers represent the population of every group and their intersections. Author's elaboration.

The choice of the different social groups was realized in connection to the dimensions that were to be investigated; (class at first) austerity, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender. Austerity was to be researched in connection to different impact on class thus the highly-skilled professionals and craftsmen were chosen as it was explained above. Sexual orientation was to be investigated with LGBTQ+ people and Albanians for the ethnic dimension. Gender was to be examined from the whole number of the participants.

In the table below, it is demonstrated which group(s) of research partners participated in which paper:

Paper (thematic focus)	<i>Young skilled professionals</i>	<i>high Manual labourers</i>	LGB+	Born in Albania
Paper 1 (Gender)	X	X	X	
Paper 2 (Sexual identity)			X	
Paper 3 (Ethnicity)				X
Paper 4 (Crisis)	X	X	X	

TABLE 2. Participation of interviewees to each paper.

*Highly-skilled professionals and craftsmen*

For this part of the study, young people (27–34) from two different occupational categories were interviewed to collect their housing pathways. The two categories were selected according to unemployment records for Greece (Work Institute of GSSE Report, 2016). They represent two extreme situations; the percentage of unemployment is one of the lowest for the first occupation and one of the highest for the second one.

The first group contains 15 young highly-qualified professionals in business administration and law occupations, graduates of prestigious Greek universities in their corresponding fields. Many of them (nine participants), carry a master’s degree in the same field. The sample for the first group was derived from graduates from the Athens University of Business and Economics, and graduates from the Law School of Athens National University, the most popular law department in Greece. There were five male and ten female participants in this research.

The second group comprises manual workers, usually without a university degree but with practical education in their field of expertise, such as carpenters and plumbers. The sample for the craftsmen, 12 men, consisted of people operating in Athens. They were mostly self-employed, but some of them belonged to work collectives. Participants in this group were all men, something sadly representative for this occupational category.

*LGB+ participants*

Sixteen people were interviewed for the LGB+ specific research, six of female gender, nine of male gender and one queer responder. Their ages were mostly between 27–35 (11 participants), and five were over the age of 35. It was crucial for the interviewees to self-identify as LGB+ regardless of their age and previous sexual or gender identities. Thus, the common characteristic of the sample is the current non-heteronormative sexual expression and in one case also the non-binary gender identity.

I contacted various related organizations, political and social syndicates, activist and support groups as well as a drag show venue in order to establish contacts for interviews

with people interested in this research. One psychologist working both privately and as a volunteer was interviewed in order to discover whether there is a trend towards LGB+ people facing housing difficulties because of their non-heteronormative personal lives. A lawyer was consulted, also, about the legal framework for housing protection for LGB+ citizens.

#### *People born in Albania*

A group of 15 people born in Albania were interviewed, six women and nine men. Seven of them self-characterized as Albanians and the other eight as Greeks originating from areas within modern Albania, also known as Northern Epirotes<sup>3</sup> (Voreiopeirotas in Greek). All of my participants were born in Albania and migrated to Greece between the ages 1–16 years old. They were all aged between 27–34 years, except for one respondent older than 34 and one younger than 27. The common part of their pathways is Athens, where they all settled after different starting points and various stops between the two countries. We are investigating both Albanian and Voreiopeirotas that migrated to Greece as they share migratory paths and a common starting point that impacted them to different extents by its culture and customs. This impact depends on both nationality and the age that the participant migrated to Greece.

These four groups were selected in order to focus on different aspects of family support. The commonalities of the groups are wholly unintentional and are a result of the chain-referral aspect of snowball sampling.

## **CITY**

The research focuses on Athens because it exhibits the characteristics conducive to my research. It is the largest city in Greece, home a big part of the country's population (approximately 3 million out of the 11,131,153 people residing in the country)<sup>4</sup>. Consequently, an extensive body of literature is available regarding social problems, cultural issues and housing trends for Athens (Siatitsa & Annunziata, 2017). Moreover, Athens provides sufficient examples of the different housing practices that are to be explored. This is therefore a very important paradigmatic city for exploring housing practices of a European-Mediterranean country.

The history of Athens, especially in post-war era, laid the basis for the current housing reality, popular housing practices and family strategies. Specifically, the state promoted the rapid urbanisation of Athens by its 'absence' and tolerance, for its own benefit. The aim in this respect was to achieve social and political stability and political support from beneficiaries. Illegalities in the self-promotion of housing needs were overlooked, since the state benefited from the taxes imposed on the construction sector, which flourished (Leontidou, 1990; Mantouvalou & Mauridou, 1993). The transformation of Athens into a

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<sup>3</sup> This ethnic group is recognized officially by the Albanian state as the Greek National Minority of Albania. ('Ελληνική Δημοκρατία - Υπουργείο Εξωτερικών'. Mfa.gr. Retrieved: 28 May 2018.)

<sup>4</sup> <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/greece-population/>

metropolis and capital city occurred over a relatively short amount of time. Like Rome and Madrid, Athens is a 'new' city – demographically speaking – despite being among the physically oldest cities in all of Europe (Leontidou, 1990). Mantouvalou (1985, 55) described Athens as 'essentially a huge "new town", a "Metropolis" that was built in 25 years in the ruins of the war and the civil war'. Post-war, Athens grew from 1.1 million inhabitants in 1940 to over 3 million in 1981 due to intense urbanisation; yet, around 2000, the population stabilised and has since not exceeded 3 million residents (Kotzamanis, 1997).

Athens constitutes the most representative urban center in Greece concerning the dimensions of housing practices investigated in this research. In particular, LGBTQ+ prefer to live in big urban centers (Di Felicianantonio & Gadelha, 2016) benefited by anonymity and friendlier leisure places and areas. Thus, researching the impact of sexual orientation in housing practices was assisted by the presence of a bigger non-heteronormative population as well as their ability to be more open about their sexuality. Concerning the Albanian migrants, this city is also important because since the 1990s there was a huge influx of migrants originated from Albania and East Europe states (Kandyliis, Maloutas & Sayas, 2012). In the Greater Athens area, in terms of geographical location, there is a concentration of the greatest number of Albanian migrants in Greece (Lyberaki & Maroukis, 2007). What is more, it seems the most appropriate Greek city to find people from different socioeconomic strata and to investigate the impact on austerity which is more obvious in the urban environment.

Concerning the methodology, being an Athenian, myself greatly assisted me in finding research partners, via my social circles. Moreover, as I was interviewing also some socially vulnerable social groups, it was easier to meet them in a big city. This is especially relevant to papers 2 and 3. Also, I could easily move about in the city during my research. Knowing the city and its social specificities, i.e., its many neighbourhoods and areas, I could more efficient analyse the housing pathways of the participants and more closely appreciate the socioeconomic meaning of housing changes.

## **TIME**

The time during which the research occurred, in 2017, was a turbulent period for the world and especially for Greece. Nearly 10 years after the most recent financial crisis and almost seven years after the first austerity measures were implemented (Vradis & Dalakoglou, 2011), housing and everyday life in Greece has been dramatically and rapidly restructured, with housing properties facing extreme taxation. During crisis home is 'a vital space for understanding the micro-geographies of social and spatial uncertainty' (Brickell, 2012, 227). The austerity measures accordingly have degraded the living conditions of Greek citizens, especially their housing situation, as household income and already insufficient state assistance have fallen (Knight & Stewart, 2016, Matos et al., 2015, Matthijs, 2014; Siatitsa, 2014). In 2010, Greece received its first bailout package, which was followed by two more bailouts, in 2012 and 2015 (Papadopoulos & Roumpakis, 2013). At the same time, economic stagnation has increasingly threatened the strongest pillar of Greece's

clientelistic<sup>5</sup> familistic society – the main welfare provider, the family (Moreno & Mari-Klose, 2013) – by removing the cost obligation from both employers and the state (Papadopoulos & Roumpakis, 2013).

## METHODOLOGY/ CHOICE OF METHODS

### METHODS

This study calls for multiple theoretical references, ranging from the cultural geography of the home to geographies of family and youth to the sociology of family to migration studies, as explored in another section. No attempt is made to discover a general truth through the narrated life stories of the research partners; rather, the objective is to understand inter-subjectivity practices, cultures and spaces. To realise this goal, a qualitative methodology was adapted, including in-depth biographical interviews as a core. When participants were willing, a deeper ethnographic inquiry by observation and or participant observation was undertaken complementary to the interviews.

The postmodern analytical framework of housing pathways was employed as the interview approach. The housing pathway is ‘the continually changing set of relationships and interactions that the household experiences over time in its consumption of housing’ (Clapham, 2005, 27). Thus, this approach was deemed the most adequate for this work that explores these specific dimensions of housing support and strategies as it refers to patterns of housing practices over time and space.

Moreover, in postmodern society, housing is perceived as a means of personal fulfilment, while housing decisions are connected to identity and lifestyle (Clapham, 2005). In particular, this approach has as a key concept the ‘categorical identity’ (class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality) (ibid.) which is important for this work that explores these kind of identities in connection to housing practices and family support. Categorical identity can have a substantial impact on housing situation; This is explored in particular in papers 1 and 2 which focus on Gender and Sexual Identity. Lifestyle is central for this analytical framework as is related to the cultural values attitudes and customs of a society, which are also significant to this research since it investigates the impact of Greek and Albania culture on housing strategies (ibid.).

Therefore, with the housing pathway approach, the researcher can explore, demonstrate and analyse the housing changes of individuals as part of a household and its interactions (Clapham, 2002). It deals with the succession of the housing forms and practices of the interviewee and his/her household. The focus on this approach is double; both the

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<sup>5</sup> *Clientelism* is the informal exchange of goods and services for political support (Tsoukala, 2015).

households' but also individuals' pathways are explored. Thus, it can also reveal the parameters that lead a person down a particular path, such as changes in employment, family status, life planning, family strategies, national and global politico-economic situations, migration, lifestyle, gender identity and even sexual orientation. Simultaneously, this kind of analysis is highlighting the intra-household dynamics without abandoning the focus on the household as a whole (Clapham, 2005). This specific possibility of this approach is significant for this work that focuses on structural issues such as gender balances, parent-child relationships, age-related roles, discourses and inter-generational micro-solidarities.

Also, the dynamic nature of pathways and the significance of time are essential for this research, which seeks to reveal changes in housing practices as a result of the financial crisis as well. Housing pathways are structured in three different types of time: individual time, family time (the stage of the family lifecycle) and historical time (the socioeconomic and political situation at the specific moment) (Clapham, Means & Munro, 1993). In this research all the three types of time are crucial as the focus is the housing practice of the individual or his/her household's in connection to the family support that experiences also a distinctive lifecycle, during a period in Greece with specific socioeconomic characteristics. Therefore, the centrality of the dimension of time strengthened the choice to use the specific approach.

#### *In-depth interviews*

The respondents were introduced to the research and the researcher via an agenda-free discussion before but also after the interview. This interaction was crucial for both parties, as well as for the research process, as it familiarised the respondents and researcher with the research context. The discussion also provided background information regarding the research partners' housing pathway in addition to other characteristics that were not used but served instead to help both parties feel more relaxed and engaged in the subsequent conversation. Three pilot biographical interviews were conducted five months before (August 2016) the field research began (January 2017) in order to test the interviewing method. The length of the interviews varied from 20 minutes to one hour and 40 minutes, while the whole procedure (including the general discussion) lasted between 1–4 hours. The interviews were conducted in either cafés or gatekeeper's houses, with only a few occurring in the research partners' houses.

The structure of the interview was divided into free narration followed by further questioning. I mainly used recorded, semi-structured interviews based on an adaptation of biographical interviewing methods, with an initial opening description of the research subject followed by an open research question asking respondents to describe their housing pathways in connection with related family housing strategies and support. In every group of participants, there was a specific second focus of the biographical narration, which will be analysed later in this chapter.

Although an interview guide was provided, respondents moved beyond the margins of specific narratives into free-flowing narration whereby they recounted their biographies, referring to a multiplicity of factors that had impacted their housing pathways and other life choices (Akiyu, 1992; Halfacree & Boyle, 1993; May, 2000). This is preferable, since

life stories can provide the researcher with important data about the ‘internal “rules” by which different people make sense of their lives’ (Chamberlayne & King, 1993; May, 2000, 8). They can also strengthen rapport between the interviewee and interviewer as much as possible given the limited time or number of meetings.

During the ‘main narrative’, the research partners (also called autobiographical narrators or biographers) were not interrupted by further questions but rather were non-verbally encouraged to continue (Rosenthal, 1993). Through this process, the interviewee narrated his/her story in relation to the focus of the research, revealing the dimensions of housing and family support through an overall construction of his or her past and anticipated future life with housing in the center (Blunt, 2003; Clapham, 2005; Rosenthal, 1993; Zinn, 2004). As Hockey and James (2003, 210) explained: ‘Thus a coherent and explanatory narrative is carved out of a set of diverse experiences and a set of past identities are assembled to account for a present identity’. The aim of this method is to facilitate the narrator’s biographical construction and then relate biographically relevant experiences to the interview themes (Rosenthal, 1993).

Another practice employed with some of the research partners was to allow them to record their housing biographies for themselves after explaining the research aim and opportunity to review the recordings for clarification. This practice proved to be quite efficient, as the research partners tended to focus on their stories in their own time and sequence.

During the narrations, the researcher took notes for later enquiry. It is important to mention that the interviewees narrated the sum of events or situations they believed to be related to the research question *but also* to be of interest to the interviewer (Rosenthal, 1993). It is also crucial to bear in mind that life stories are socially constructed, combining social reality with individual (and individualised) experiential worlds (ibid.). Moreover, biographical research interviews represent, in essence, the sum of interactions between the biographer and the interviewer.

After the initial narrations, further narrations were elicited based on the biographical events just described via questions concerning each housing practice and family support incident implicated in the narrator’s housing pathway. The questions and the themes covered are presented in Appendix 1.

#### *Double Biographies*

In order to investigate the different dimensions of housing practices and family support the method of double biographies was used. The aim was to attempt the construction of double or triple biographies contextualizing any change in housing practices and relating them to person’s experience in other arenas (Forrest & Murie, 1991; Maya & Tuma, 1987; May, 2000). The life stories of the research partners were collected with housing as a primary focus; however, concerning each group, multiple foci were also considered.

For the craftsmen and highly skilled professionals, focus was placed on their housing pathways in the context of the financial crisis and austerity and its impact on them, their families, their families’ housing strategies, as well as on their families’ ability to support their members when in need of housing support.

Concerning the group of research partners born in Albania, were asked to narrate their migratory paths in order to connect them to their housing practices. Moreover, an in-depth analysis of their transnational housing practices vis-à-vis their family relationships was also performed.

Regarding the LGBTQ+ research group, their 'coming out' process to family – if it had occurred – was discussed and situated in the timeline of their housing pathways. One major question explored was the direct impact, if any, of the disclosure of their sexual orientation on their housing pathways. The indirect impact of disclosure, mainly concerning their personal lives and life pursuits at home as well as geographic limitations faced in terms of feeling welcome at home, familial houses e.g., family vacation homes or abroad was also investigated.

During the interviews, timelines were created for the interviewees' housing pathways. Thereafter, recorded life stories and notes in hand, a chronological order of accommodation biographies was recreated when needed to connect them with parallel incidents and biographies (a.k.a. 'double biographies').

However, after the whole procedure, a 'contrastive comparison of life history and life story' (Rosenthal, 1993, 65), especially concerning the perceptions of the biographers about family support and self-sufficiency in terms of their housing situations, was realized. Differences were revealed between the narrated and lived experiences through the interviewing process, and this provided interesting data about misperceptions of what family housing support should entail for each of them. Thus, each narrated experience was identified and positioned inside the overall narration's construction (ibid.).

The narrations were entirely transcribed, verbatim, with little regard for formal grammatical rules in order to capture the subtle meanings. Concerning the selection of interviewees, personal networks were used to gain access to and build rapport among the research partners. In other words, snowball sampling from multiple initial contacts was employed to reach individuals who may otherwise have been uncomfortable revealing their ethnicity, sexual orientation or class status (Valentine, 1993). All interviews were conducted in the Greek language.

Moreover, coding was applied to the interview material to identify, and thereafter analyse, the main points emphasized during the respondents' narrations. In most of the interviews, thematic field analysis was realized, noting sequences, themes, or stages of the housing story of the research partner. The narrative segments are also categorized according to the style of narration (Rosenthal, 1993).

Biographical interviewing proved to be a highly appropriate method for the investigated theme. However, due to the nature of this research, readjustments to the methodology and even to the different perspectives/thematics were frequently made based on field interactions.

#### *Non-participant Observation and Participant Observation*

The methods of non-participant and participant observation were complementary to the interviews. Specifically, data from observation was collected from various participants and non-participants that belong to the researched age group, live in Athens and accept or deny housing support from their families. That said, this data was used cautiously and only with the consent of those involved. This approach was useful for situating myself more closely in the local context and for engaging more deeply with the housing reality of Greece and with my research partners. The observations were carried out in various households (friendly, related or participants') but also in the streets as I was encountering people in my everyday activities. These observations proved to be rich in data and provided further insight into the dimension of gender, class and austerity in Greek households.

Also, participant observation was realized in the household life of some of the research partners especially of the group of *high-skilled professionals* for short periods, up to one month. During these periods I lived with my research partners, hosted in their household and participated in everyday activities from leisure to housing chores. The short period of this ethnographic inquiry cannot render it sufficient for substantial outcomes. However, this complementary method strengthened the ability to analyse the biographical interviews and to realize the thematic analysis.

#### *Housing Policy Analysis*

An analysis of Greek governmental policies towards housing was also held but did not constitute the main approach, as these policies are insufficient (and do not even intend) to regulate housing practices. Accordingly, focus was placed on other parameters that tend to greatly impact the housing reality, such as cultural factors. Therefore, historical reference is made to the policies in connection with family strategies in housing. Moreover, housing policy analysis served as a basic feature of the housing pathway approach, excluding however the formal policy description and focusing on the ways the policies are implemented and how households react to them (Clapham, 2005). For a deeper policy analysis, interviews were conducted with an employee of the Ministry of Work, Welfare and Social Security for the current and prospective state housing policies and especially the ones that are targeting young people.

#### **ETHICS AND POSITION OF INTERVIEWER**

It is argued that a truly ethical research is not possible because of power imbalances present in the field; however, to mitigate these imbalances, I continually reflected upon and evaluated the effect of my presence in the field. Moreover, some basic precautions were employed, such as removing personal identifying information, especially names and locations, for the sake of anonymity and confidentiality. Instead, pseudonyms were used for names and limited, mainly size-related information was provided regarding locations, e.g., town, village or urban centre, excluding Athens, which was, of course, the primary site for the research. Also, permission was sought (and gained) in all cases to record the interviews on a mobile phone. Lastly, none of the information obtained in this project will ever be

publicly disclosed, thereby ensuring the anonymity and confidentiality of the research participants.

In this research, gender and sexual identities were regarded and researched as socially constructed phenomena that exert behavioural influences on those who adopt them. The LGBTQ+ community in Greece still lives under the ‘governance of family biopolitics’ (Suen, 2015, 722) and continues to face discrimination due to the dominance of religion in social life. Simultaneously, housing and financial support are considerably dependent on the degree of family approval of the receiver’s lifestyle. Therefore, interviewing members of the LGBTQ+ community was undertaken cautiously, as some interviewees would be vulnerable to discrimination as well as adverse consequences for their housing pathways should their status become known. In acknowledging this predicament, I try to adopt a reflexive perspective when engaging in the research process.

Concerning the research partners who were born in Albania, it was of both academic and political interest to deeply explore the housing and family culture of Albanians and Northern Epirotes residents in Greece as immigrants, to identify any similarities in terms of housing practices and family strategies as well as potential links between the Albanian and Greek cultures. This is *not* to say that an attempt was made to ‘prove’ that Albanians are *like* Greeks via a simplistic (and ultimately futile) effort to highlight similarities. On the contrary, the aim was to instead offer important insights into the integration process of Albanians in terms of housing practices. Moreover, the housing problems faced by immigrant groups in Greece were also investigated in order to determine how best to improve their and their families’ quality of life.

As mentioned above, the data was analysed reflexively by acknowledging the positionality and dominance of the researcher’s ethnic identity and by recognising how the accordant privilege, power, and personal and political biases can affect the research scope and outcomes, including the content and progress of the biographical interviews. Except for the methodology discussed in this chapter, in each of the following papers the particular methods employed is discussed as well as specific ethical considerations; Although the main research question remained the same, the different focus of each paper required its own customised methods. And since each paper involves different social group(s), ethical concerns and positionality were adjusted and considered accordingly.

## **STRUCTURE OF THE WORK**

Before outlining the dissertation, it is important to stress that it comprises a collection of four research papers, three average-sized and one short-sized. Each paper was submitted to an international peer-reviewed academic journal (detailed in a following section), and each

develops an independent, original argument with specific research questions concerning a current academic debate. The four papers are presented as chapters in this dissertation; whereas this chapter presents the research question, objectives and main concerns, as well as the methodology, ethical considerations and positionality.

The first paper, titled 'Keeping the children close and the daughters closer. Is family housing support in Greece gendered?', builds a theoretical framework to explain the impact of gender identity on family housing provisions to younger members. The paper theorizes the connection between housing and family culture, and welfare regimes in Southern Europe and Greece in particular. To understand housing culture as well as the ways in which family strategies were developed in contemporary Greece, a brief scholarly history of housing practices is presented. Based on this literature review, and in addition to some feminist contributions, understanding of family support for housing and related strategies is broadened. Through the participants' housing pathways, the impact of gender identity on family housing support is illuminated. This is done in connection to the gender roles and obligations inside families and kinship. During discussion, the family housing provision is explored as a gift that generates gendered identities and reproduce hierarchies and power imbalances inside family.

The second paper, 'When housing is provided, but only if you remain in the "closet". The impact of sexual identity on housing practices for LGB+ Greek people', introduces a discussion about the impact of non-normative sexual orientation on family support for housing. First, the literature on Greek family culture, housing practices and crisis is reviewed. Furthermore, building on feminist and queer contributions, the paper investigates the social climate surrounding the LGB+ community in Greek society and especially the issues of 'coming out' and family support for housing. In the next section, informed by the empirical research, the direct and indirect impact of sexual orientation on family housing support is investigated. That said, the indirect impact is stressed in order not to oversee its blow on LGB+ lives. Afterwards, a discussion about Greek heteronormative homes as suppressive but also unconscious shelters for those identifying as LGBTQ+ is presented.

In the third paper, 'Shpi and 'Spiti. Transnational housing pathways of emigrant Albanian families in Greece. Migration, housing and culture.', the cultural dimension of family housing strategies for young emigrants born in Albania is examined. In theoretical terms, firstly the family and Albanian housing culture as well as migration culture are explored. After clarifying the above concepts, the paper examines the theory of transnationalism in particular for Albanians in Greece. This theoretical framing introduces the empirical part where Albanian family housing strategies and housing practices are explored in connection with family and kin culture. Moreover, Albanian emigrants' transnational housing strategies are investigated in both the 'old' and the 'new' country. These strategies however, may reproduce hierarchies inside the family and the kin that impact young people's life decisions.

The fourth paper, 'The ongoing role of family in the provision of housing in Greece during crisis', is a short paper that investigates the impact of crisis and austerity on family support. Focused on the Southern European welfare regime, the current financial crisis and austerity measures, the housing strategies of families are explored through young people's housing

pathways. The paper shows how resistant families can be to economic turbulence, as well as the power relations that are created that can suppress receiver's wills and ambitions.

## **EXISTING LITERATURE AND RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS**

The dissertation consults and contributes to a number of inter-disciplinary debates and scientific research literature.

Firstly, it consults the literature on financialization and the shift towards 'asset-based' welfare regimes (e.g. Aalbers, 2008, Doling and Ronald, 2010, Rolnik, 2013, Ronald, 2008; Kaika, 2012; Ronald and Elsinga, 2012, Watson, 2009, 2010) while it accepts for the Greek case the existence of a Southern European welfare regime. The idea regarding this categorization was introduced by Esping-Andersen (1990) but progressed into a more complete/comprehensive categorization with the work of other scholars through the years (Ferrera, 1996; 2000; 2005; Guillén & Matsaganis, 2000; Allen, 2006; Rhodes, 1996; Katrougalos 1996; Petmesidou, 1996; Andreotti et al., 2001; Allen et al., 2004; Saraceno & Keck, 2010; Moreno & Mari-Klose, 2013; Martin, 2015; Zambarloukou, 2015; Moreno-Fuentes & Mari-Klose, 2016). In the current work, Greek welfare regime is analyzed as belonging to the model that stresses the importance of family as the most powerful welfare agent. This hypothesis is in line with the research hypothesis of the whole dissertation and is validated by the research outcomes.

Moreover, as this work is positioned in contemporary Greece, Southern Europe, in the midst of a sovereign crisis, the scholarship about the impact of crisis and austerity in Southern Europe (Balabanidis, Patatouka & Siatitsa, 2013; Papadopoulos & Roumpakis, 2013; Pinto & Guerra, 2013; Petmesidou, 2013; Saraceno, 2013; Baldini & Poggio, 2014; Matthijs, 2014; Marques et al., 2014; Pavolini & Raitano, 2015; Di Mascio & Natalini, 2015; Matos et al., 2015; Zambarloukou, 2015; Cotella et al., 2016; García-Lamarca & Kaika, 2016; Knight & Stewart, 2016; Moreno-Fuentes & Mari-Klose, 2016; Sabaté, 2016a; 2016b; Siatitsa & Annunziata, 2017; Alexandri & Janoschka, 2018) is discussed and hopefully enriched by it.

Simultaneously, it contributes to the work of an increasing number of researchers who focus on young people's trajectories during the current financial crisis (Micheli & Rosina, 2010; Forrest & Yip, 2012; Moreno & Mari-Klose, 2013; Serracant, 2015; Lennartz, Arundel & Ronald, 2015; Bricocoli & Sabatinelli, 2016; Gentile, 2016; Mínguez, 2016). The literature about Southern Europe, youth trajectories and crisis are often overlaid.

Concerning the main focus i.e. family support mechanisms/practices regarding housing, this work aims to contribute to the related literature about family housing strategies in family-

centric cultural contexts (Naldini, 2003; Maloutas, 2008; Kalogeraki, 2008; Naldini & Jurado, 2013; Papadopoulos & Roumpakis, 2013; Leon & Pavolini, 2014; Tsoukala, 2015; Martin, 2015; see also Ronald & Lennartz, 2018). Additionally, it is connected with research concerning the significance of home in the constitution of family values and social identity performance (Bourdieu 1984; Duncan 1973; Duncan & Duncan 2003; Firey 1945; Hugill 1989; Miller 2001; Pratt 1981). This choice of the geographical specificity about this field of literature is intentional as this work is aiming to analyse the family housing strategies in particular cultures where family welfare is significant and often replaces state policy in many life aspects like housing provision.

The dissertation is also positioned among the gendered and critical geographies of home (Massey, 1994; Young, 1997; Madigan & Munro, 1997; Domosh, 1998; Morley, 2002; Blunt & Varley, 2004; Mallet, 2004; Blunt, 2005; Silva, 2005; Blunt&Dowling, 2006) and geographies of family (Charles and Kerr, 1988; Finch, 1989; Allan & Crow, 1989; Finch and Mason, 1993; Morgan, 1996; Muncie et al., 1997; Paxson, 2004; Valentine & Hughes, 2011; Holt, 2011) by combining a theoretical background of these two fields.

Moreover, this work is adding to the extensive literature about 'coming out' to the family (Cramer & Roach, 1988; Savin-Williams, 1989; 2001; Newman & Muzzonigro, 1993; D'augelli, Hershberger & Pilkington, 1998; Waldner & Magrader, 1999; Valentine, Skelton & Butler, 2003; Gorman-Murray, 2008a; Waitt & Gorman-Murray, 2011; Legate, Ryan & Weinstein, 2012; Baiocco et al., 2015; Wandrey, Mosack & Moore, 2015; Gusmano, 2018 to name some). Also, it refers to the geographical dimension of this process (e.g. Di Feliciano&Gadehla, 2016, Gorman-Murray, 2007, 2009; Lewis, 2012, 2013; Nash and Gorman-Murray, 2014). Furthermore, it may benefit the investigation of family reactions and home balances in different cultural contexts (Johnston & Valentine, 1995; Elwood, 2000; Gorman-Murray, 2006; 2008; McDermott, Roen, & Scourfield, 2008; Tunåker, 2015).

This work also aims to contribute to the scholarship about the gendered impact of crisis (Andreotti, Mingione & Pratschke, 2013; Vaiou 2014a; 2014b; Papageorgiou & Petousi, 2018) in a family-centric society. Simultaneously, from the work with the LGBTQ+ research partners I wish to contribute to the scholarship about 'sexual politics of austerity' (Trujillo & Santos, 2014; Brown, 2015; Di Feliciano, 2015; Eleftheriadis, 2015).

This work hopes to contribute also through its qualitative research with life stories to Greek (Friedl, 1959; 1962; 1967; 1970; Campbell, 1964; 1983; Herzfeld, 1980; Clogg, 1983; Kaplan, 1985; Loizos & Papataxiarchēs, 1991; Loizos, 1994; Georgas et al., 1996; Dubisch, 2014; Paxson, 2004) and Albanian (Young, 2000; Vaiou, 2007; Stecklov et al., 2010; Çaro, Bailey & Van Wissen, 2012; Mai, 2013; Vomvyla, 2013a; Sadiku, 2014; Vullnetari & King, 2016) cultural studies about family, gender roles and the meaning of home.

## **RESEARCH GAPS/PAPERS**

Through this work, contributions are attempted concerning some unexplored dimensions of the main welfare agent of Greece and Southern Europe, the family in the provision of housing. The multiple ways the familistic culture is impacting on the well-being of the young person are explored in this work. Each paper fills existing literature gaps in its corresponding field.

The impact of gender on housing support in Greece and Southern Europe (Paper 1) has thus far been understudied, researched only indirectly through the lens of the gendered impact of the financial crisis and family geographies, as mentioned above. However, no specific work has focused on the gender attributes of family housing support in connection to the imposed social roles of each gender. Also, as this study focuses on the Southern European welfare regime and its consequences for women, this work contributes to feminist critiques of welfare regime theory, especially in the certain cultural context. Therefore, paper 1 aims to bridge this existing gap at the intersection of home, family and gender geographies.

Paper 2 focuses on the impact of LGB+ non-conventional sexual identities on housing support from the traditional Greek family. This work is filling a gap in the literature as especially in the Southern Europe the impact of the sexual identity in housing is almost absent. Moreover, coming-out process is understudied in Southern Europe and in particular Greece even though it constitutes a life defining moment/period. All in all, family response on sexual orientation in a conservative familistic environment and its impact on support and everyday life is not researched thoroughly.

Concerning paper 3, the transnational housing strategies in both countries (Greece and Albanian) constitutes an investigated research field. However, research is mostly focused on Albanian investment practices or return strategies (Dalakoglou, 2010b; Loizou, Michailidis & Karasavoglou, 2014; Gemi, 2016), while more research is centered on transnational identity construction in connection to migration processes (Dalakoglou, 2009; 2010a; Vomvyla, 2013a; 2013b, Gemi, 2014). This research seeks to gain insight simultaneously into housing practices and strategies in both the “old” (Albania) and the “new” country (Greece). It investigates these transnational strategies in connection to Albanian cultural characteristics of family and gender feeling this gap in the intersection of the existing scholarship.

Paper 4 seeks to bridge the gap at the junction between the literature on the current crisis, its impact on Southern European regimes and how families have responded to the crisis, concerning housing in particular. Investigations of family responses to the crisis in terms of the housing needs of family members are rising, even outside typically family-centric Southern Europe (see also the project HOUWEL, <http://houwel.uva.nl/project/project.html> e.g. Arundel & Ronald, 2015). However, limited research has been conducted on such responses through the lens of family member narratives that discusses the intergenerational power relations that housing support nourishes and how this impact the freedom of the receivers.

## COLLABORATIONS

In this short section, the collaborations and progress of each one of the papers are presented. Paper 3 was co-authored with Prof. John Sayas (National Technical University of Athens and The Greek Ombudsman) during my study visit to Athens in 2018. The remaining three papers (Paper 1, 2, 4) were written by me, the author of this dissertation. That said, contemporary research cannot be considered the result of parthenogenesis – in other words, the support and guidance of the many scholars who advised me all these years, as well as numerous others, both scholars and non-scholars, whom I met and/or whose work I reviewed, had an undeniable impact on this work and should therefore be acknowledged.

Paper 1 has been submitted for publication in the journal *Families, Relationships and Societies*. Paper 2 is undergoing the first phase of review in the journal, *Sexualities*. Paper 3 is submitted to the scientific journal, *CITY*. Paper 4 is being published in *Critical Housing Analysis*. However, in the thesis this paper was enriched according to the suggestions of the referees.

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## **PAPER 1**

### **Keeping the children close and the daughters closer. Is family housing support in Greece gendered?**

#### **ABSTRACT**

The welfare regime of Southern Europe and Greece in particular does not adequately cover the needs of its citizens. On the contrary and within this welfare context, family welfare is much more efficient. The importance of the family has increased in recent years in Greece, following a short period of attempted modernisation with non-conventional household formation before the 2008 economic crisis, when it became the main shock absorber of socio-economic turbulence. However, the support received from the family imposes a sense of reciprocity, as receivers are expected to be givers in the future. This reciprocity is assisted mainly by the female members of the kin, defining in a degree their housing practices. Bringing gender to front stage it is explored how the housing provision from family is impacted by receivers' gender role in connection to kinship processes that supplement welfare services provided by the state. Data is used from a wider research project about young people's housing practices and family strategies conducted in Athens, Greece in 2017. The results of this analysis show that through the housing support a preferable, prefabricated lifepath is transmitted that is in accordance with the family and kinship obligations and ambitions.



## INTRODUCTION

*Like snails that are born with their shell, Greeks are 'born' with their houses that their Greek family provides for them. In other words, when children are born, there usually exists a provisional plan for their future housing needs. However, this shell can also be a heavy burden.* (Author's notes during the preparation of the research, Spring 2016).

*Ikoyenia*, which means 'family' in Greek, comes from two words: *oikos* (house) and *yenia* (generation) (Paxson, 2004; Iossifides, 1991). The term highlights the prime location of the family inside the house. In Greece and other Mediterranean countries, the home signifies a private place for the reproduction of the household's ethics. It is also a place of work, an economic asset and a form of investment. Owning a house presents advantages in terms of social integration; it also provides a foundation for improved living conditions and social status (Mantouvalou & Mavridou, 1993). Thus, family housing provisions for younger family members is an important aspect of Greek culture.

Moreover, the Greek concept of the house is typically patriarchal: The house is meant to be managed by the male breadwinner, who determines the rules. In Greek, the term used to refer to one's parental home is *patriko* (paternal), regardless of the gender of the proprietor. This term highlights the paternal hierarchy that still exists in Greece. Another historical correlation between home and gender is the dowry culture (see Allen, 1985; Herzfeld, 1980; Kaplan, 1984). This custom has impacted on family housing strategies and consequently on families' preference for male descendants, as they do not need dowries. In cases of marriage, the parents of the bride typically had to offer a dowry to the groom in the form of money or other assets. The dowry was calculated according to the bride's health, looks, strength and reputation (Friedl, 1962; Allen, 1985). This unavoidable expense meant that the family had to be strategic in order to afford the cost of a dowry and ensure that the daughters had good prospects in marriage (Friedl, 1962; Allen, 1985). Traditionally, the dowry was used to fund a home for the newlyweds (Allen, 1985), thus passing capital from one generation to the next (Friedl, 1962). Today, dowries are typically banned by law but they still exist informally in the form of family housing support for young people, regardless gender.

Simultaneously, the Southern European welfare state was never able to cover the needs of its citizens, thus strengthening the dependence on family welfare. The Greek welfare system, in particular, promotes a strong commitment to maintaining the traditional family unit, preserving the structure of private patriarchal relationships and sustaining the strong division between public and private spheres. By this strategy, the state is burdened only by the minimum cost of providing social services to cover citizens' needs (Mingione, 1995; Ferrera, 2010; Arundel & Ronald, 2015). The social services provided are merely complementary to family welfare especially when family reserves reach their limits. The only viable solution to survive is a familial strategy to 'gather odds and ends of income wherever they can find them' (Trifiletti, 1999, 53). Correspondingly, the existing welfare

regime does not insulate young adults from involuntary economic dependence on their families.

Since the 2008 financial crisis, the importance of family support is increasing, as it is perceived the only way to achieve a housing solution. Today, families in Greece create housing strategies to ensure the well-being of their children, as owning a house is considered a secure asset that certifies a family's protection against urban challenges, both political and economic. Family housing provisions for younger members usually bear certain characteristics that are linked to the – assumed – identity of the beneficiary. Women and men seem to be offered different housing solutions that are dependent on their gender and intra-familial responsibilities.

In Greece, the main care-provider in the family is the woman with her unpaid work and dedication to kin's needs. Simultaneously, the welfare state is blind to any gender imbalance inside the family, as it does not support women who have to combine their professional work with the provision of care services for their extended family (O'Connor, 1993). Thus, housing support from the main welfare agent (i.e. the family) acknowledges the vital role that women play and offers housing solutions to support this role. The gender dimension of family housing provision in Greece is an understudied topic, researched only indirectly by the gendered impact of the crisis in family-centric societies (Andreotti, Mingione & Pratschke, 2013; Vaiou 2014a; 2014b; Papageorgiou & Petousi, 2018). There is no specific work focusing on the gender attributes of family housing support in connection to the imposed social roles of each gender.

In this study, 40 research partners were interviewed in relation to their experiences of housing. Through these life stories and housing pathways, it is explored if the gender of the beneficiary is affecting the family housing provision that is destined for him/her. The goal is to acknowledge the implications of self-evident housing support on people's, especially women's, urban lives. As gender here is considered the conventional binary of women and men in accordance to Greek hegemonic ideology. The choice of gender binarism is done with careful consideration in order to research effectively the conservative Greek culture that accepts mainly the classification of gender into these two distinct forms as well as heteronormativity.

The following section addresses issues of the Southern European and especially the Greek welfare regime and the role of the family and gender within it. The second section elaborates the development of housing and family housing strategies in Greece and the current crisis' impact. This exploration is followed by the methodology employed in this research. The next section draws on empirical data from the field and is divided in two main parts. In the first part, the types of family support are described in order to introduce the impact of gender in the offered housing solutions. The second part demonstrates how the role of carer which is destined almost exclusively form female family members impacts housing support, decisions and pathway during the lifecycle. The concluding section briefly discusses how family housing support aims to reproduce gender roles that preserves a family-centric culture before it concludes with further reflections on housing as a gift and identity generator.

## THE SOUTHERN EUROPEAN WELFARE AND FAMILY REGIME

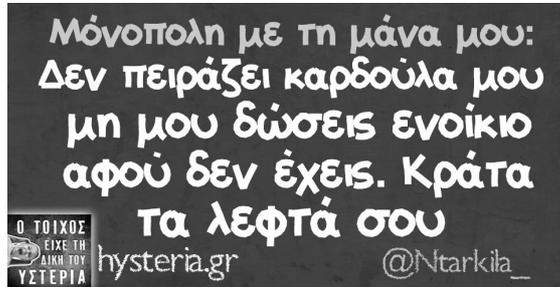


FIGURE 1: Greek quote from a random Facebook wall: '[While playing] Monopoly with my mother: 'It's ok my sweetheart, don't pay me the rent because you don't the have [money]. Keep your money.', Retrieved from: <https://hysteria.gr/27188/>

In Southern Europe, the importance of the family<sup>6</sup> as a social institution has deep historical roots (Naldini, 2003; Poggio, 2008; Ferrera, 2010), and citizens tend to follow family-based strategies in order to cope with their financial difficulties. Family members employ specific housing strategies to strengthen family welfare by collectivising problems and means, providing care services and maintaining a residential, financial and/or sentimental proximity to family members.

Leibrfried (1993) claims that the Greek welfare regime follows the Latin model, while Ferrera (1996) posits that it follows a Southern European model. However, the categorisation made by Trifiletti (1999) seems the most appropriate and inclusive. She groups Greece, along with the other Southern European countries, in the Mediterranean welfare regime, separating them from the breadwinner welfare regime<sup>7</sup>. The main structure of this micro-economy<sup>8</sup> is the family. Within this structure, the traditionally male breadwinner benefits from good employment opportunities during his active years. However, this income is not typically sufficient to support a family. There has always been the need for some form of indirect support from the state or the family in order to ensure survival (Trifiletti, 1999). Indeed, some members of the family may benefit from favourable social security and pension programmes. This social security schemes even though not sufficient alone in combination with other family incomes and allowances can achieve a 'synthesis of breadcrumbs' in order to meet the needs of family members (Trifiletti, 1999). Through this synthesis, the immediate and extended family members are supported

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<sup>6</sup> In this research, the 'family' comprises the extended family, not only the nuclear one, and consists of grandparents, aunts, uncles, in-laws and cousins (Paxson, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> In both the breadwinner and the Mediterranean model, state considers women as wives and mothers but in the breadwinner model the state protects citizens from the market whereas in the Mediterranean regime there is no state protection against the market (Trifiletti, 1999).

<sup>8</sup> As such various intra-familial economic processes, such as production, division of labor, income management and financial strategies are considered.

(Martin, 1996; Naldini & Jurando, 2013). Therefore, there is need to collectivize the family incomes in order to make ends meet and consequently collectivize the financial difficulties and vice versa.

Therefore, Greek citizens employ housing strategies to strengthen family welfare. Even since the end of WWII and the Greek civil war (1949) Greek planning laws encouraged spontaneity in city development (Leontidou, 1990) and speculation in space production (Tsoulouvis, 1987), rendering homeownership achievable for all social classes as it is analyzed in the next section. However, the ones that acquired urban properties in this period, they ensure an asset for the next generation and a form of financial security that reproduces a social stratification through the years. However, access to homeownership declined in the next generations and thus it was stratified unevenly across generations (Forrest & Yip, 2012). This differentiation of the access penalized those who did not manage to achieve the homeownership the years of 'housing prosperity'.

Homeownership and social stratification are also reproduced by the pattern of the family *polykatoikia* (apartment building). In this pattern, a detached house that is owned by a family is extended in order to accommodate other family members, especially the oldest and youngest (Antonakaki, Rizos & Vaiou, 1983; Mantouvalou & Mavridou, 1993). Parents invest in this scheme (of the family *polykatoikia*) in order to produce more houses in the plot. They do this by adding extra floors, thus creating a construction that is many storeys high. Inside these buildings, family members live almost exclusively, meaning that a stranger may be faced with mistrust and hostility. The vicinity of family households also produces an area of support in terms of family welfare, with childcare and general repairs taking place here (Allen et al., 2004). This scheme of kinship's proximity and reciprocal support provides security and financial relief to family members (Mantouvalou & Mavridou, 1993).

Another common practice in Greece is extended intergenerational cohabitation. This practice became more common during the 2008 crisis (Marques et al., 2014). Extended stays or returns to the parental home can be explained by the poor performance of the labour market, the absence of welfare support for housing, the limited availability of high-quality and affordable rented housing and the cultural norm of relying on the family (Micheli & Rosina, 2010; Serracant, 2015; Minquez, 2016). Considering the above, many Greeks are supported by a 'cushion' of intergenerational solidarity and family welfare (Serracant, 2015) resembling a 'substitute for the limitations of state intervention' (Martin, 1996, 31).

The reciprocity of support across generations inside the 'welfare society' (i.e. families, extended relatives and neighbours) is assisted by women's devotion *to* and work done *for* their families (Martin, 1996). The welfare society functions on the basis of personal connections, affective links, networks of exchange and sociability, and a cashless economy (de Sousa Santos, 1987, 1994; Hespanha, 1995; Arriscado Nunes, 1995). Specifically, the work conducted by women includes informal healthcare services; caring for the frail, the elderly and the young; helping with housework; shopping; and providing companionship (Vaiou, 1996).

Accordingly, despite the importance of the family as an institution, state support for it is almost non-existent (Papadopoulos, 1998). In particular, state fails to secure a female presence in the labour market and consequently gender determines one's participation in the labour force and circumstances of employment (O'Connor, 1993). This is done in multiple ways. Firstly, they "are sent" into the labour market without protection as they do not usually enjoy union protection (Trifiletti, 1999). Secondly, there is lack of state provision for care services for the family. This in combination with the fact that their care work is taken for granted leaves no alternatives to working women but to undermine their career in order to cover family care needs. Moreover, women, because of their devotion to family welfare and obligations, are always disadvantaged in the pensions as their career is impacted by the urgent needs of the family (Trifiletti, 1999). Therefore, they may stay unemployed or work part-time for a period in order to assist another family member in need. This situation sustains traditional family structures and the gendered division of roles and domestic chores (Martin, 1996).

The above are only some of the indications that Greek welfare regime is certainly not gender-neutral. In fact, the state sustains indirectly through its inadequacy the patriarchal culture and a vicious circle of kinship obligations for women (Martin, 1996). This situation reinforces the position of women as sole carers within families, reproducing their economic dependence on men (Papadopoulos, 1998). Accordingly, dependence and especially housing dependence from the family in the certain welfare context proves to be gendered as it will be shown from the field research.

## HOUSING AND FAMILY CULTURE IN GREECE

Understanding the culture of housing and family in Greece is crucial in order to understand the deep roots of familistic culture in relation to housing provisions. In this section, the development of Greek housing in relation to the family is explored in Athens, the Greek capital. This development will be charted from the establishment of the Greek state until the present day.

Following the establishment of the Greek state (1832) and subsequent agrarian reforms in 1897 and 1909, peasants demanded and sometimes succeeded in owning the land they worked on for generations (Leontidou, 1990; Hatjimihalis, 2005). Thus, Greek people have always had a desire to own their land, and they had expectations to continue this arrangement in urban areas when urbanization process started (Allen, 1985). Greece, similar to other Mediterranean countries (Leontidou, 1990), depended heavily on agricultural production and the culture of family and kinship. This culture demanded close cooperation in order to succeed in everyday activities, and the proximity and solidarity of family households prevailed (Clogg, 1983).

Following the Second World War, there was an emergent need for housing in order to cover the needs of the population (Mantouvalou, 1985; Vaiou, Mantouvalou & Mavridou, 2000). This was especially the case in Athens regarding the internal migrants who had moved there after the war and those who had become homeless as a result of the war (Leontidou, 1990; Allen et al., 2004; Kasimis et al., 2012). The state policy for this need was to tolerate public land dispossession and the illegal construction of private housing (Alexandri, 2018). This 'non policy' created an unspoken agreement between the state and its citizens that citizens will self-regulate their housing needs while the state will allow this and even support it indirectly (Hadjimichalis, 2011; 2014).

The state allowed, through its policies and tolerance, the spread of illegal housing construction.<sup>9</sup> This represented a strategic tactic, as the housing needs of the Athenian population were covered with minimum cost shouldered by the state (Allen et al., 2004). Access to land and housing acted as a substitute for state insurance and security against work instability and low wages. It also facilitated urban integration for new citizens (Leontidou, 1990; Allen et al., 2004). The social diffusion of homeownership proved especially beneficial to the working classes which were able to acquire a property with a bearable cost (Allen et al., 2004; Poggio, 2008). A category of tax exemptions was also introduced for intra-family money transfers, dowries and parental donations (Maloutas, 2008). Families exploited these policies to gain access to property and provide housing solutions for their family members. In this way, the housing needs of the urban population following the Second World War appeared to be (self-)regulated.

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<sup>9</sup> This term refers to a production that was neither commercial nor social, as there did not yet exist a housing market or social housing solutions (Mantouvalou & Mavridou, 1993).

Later, between 1965 and 1980, there was an intense period of housing production that differentiated family housing strategies (Emmanouel, 2006). The implementation of the *antiparochi* system promoted this intense production (Leontidou, 1990; Mantouvalou & Mavridou, 1993). With this system, a small landowner could turn his<sup>10</sup> property over to construction by offering his plot to a contractor. In this way a joint venture was created between the owner of the land and the contractor who provided the capital and the management of the construction project. The contractor would then build an apartment building and finance its construction by selling some of the apartments beforehand. The landowner, as compensation, would receive one or usually more apartments, and the rest of the apartments represented the “payment” to the contractor (Leontidou, 1990).

Hence, the small landowner meliorated the quality of his home by moving to a modern house while also being able to cover the current and future housing needs of his family with the extra apartments. Wealth accumulation in favour of future family strategies could also be realised by renting or selling the surplus apartments that he gained from antiparochi process (Allen et al., 2004; Maloutas, 2008). Simultaneously, the state gradually incorporated the illegal buildings (built in previous periods) into city plans, thus rendering them legal (Leontidou, 1990). These buildings were then eligible for inclusion in the *antiparochi* process (Mantouvalou & Mavridou, 1993). Thus, the retrospective legalisation of large areas of the city was an indirect response to the housing needs of urban areas (Leontidou, 1990).

At this time, family housing strategies included accommodation provisions for younger members within the family house or in a separate settlement. The family’s housing resources were shared through property redistribution, while intergenerational cohabitation was also a popular housing solution (Maloutas, 2008). Younger members also received financial support in the form of parental donations in order to acquire a house. Up until the 1980s, citizens could not invest their savings in any other activity (Mantouvalou & Mavridou, 1993). Thus, families tended to purchase a secondary home in order to increase the household’s financial security (Allen et al., 2004).

Since the 1960s, Greece has experienced a process of modernisation, which has led to the transition from an extended family system to a nuclear one (Papadopoulos, 1998). However, the close proximity of extended family homes has always been a favourable pattern, as it facilitated intra-family care services (Allen et al., 2004; Maloutas, 2008).

In the decades following the 1960s, and up until the 1990s, the achievement of homeownership was dependent on the income levels of the household. Income could come from more than one breadwinner as well as assistance from the extended family (Allen et al., 2004). The market became a major player in the housing sector, but Greek mortgage loans did not favour lenders. Higher initial deposits were still required, and so family support remained indispensable for new households (Allen et al., 2004). Simultaneously, the tax exemptions that were initiated for intra-family money transfers, dowries, parental donations and construction indirectly promoted homeownership (Poggio, 2008).

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<sup>10</sup> A gendered pronoun is used here because at this period, the owner of the house was usually perceived to be a man. The patriarch was considered responsible for important decisions and dominant physical characteristics, such as violence and honour (Clogg, 1983), were part of housing acquisition.

Moreover, the percentage of buyers increased, whereas the percentage of self-builders decreased (Maloutas, 2003). The second-hand housing market became popular due to the transfer of properties from the upper and middle classes to the lower classes (Maloutas, 2008). Rich families could continue to accumulate housing by exploiting their assets, thus improving the general quality of their homes (Sayas, 2006). The less-privileged families turned to defensive tactics, used their family housing reserves and rearranged the formation of the household in order to cover the existing needs of its members (Maloutas, 2008).

The period from the 1960s to the 1990s was accompanied by social changes in family life. The socio-economic ambitions of citizens altered, and women demonstrated their ability to participate in the labour force, meaning that new types of families were introduced (e.g. single-parent households) (Moreno & Mari-Klose, 2013). Women also demonstrated a growing emancipation will. However, the role of the family and kinship network was still crucial, as working women needed the support of their kin in order to realise their careers and keep up with their household, family and kinship obligations (Arapoglou & Sayas, 2009).

Following the year 2000, housing construction projects declined, and subsidies merely reinforced loans (Allen et al., 2004; Siatitsa, 2014). The mortgage market grew due to the ending of restrictions on bank housing-loans in connection with the government announcement of future rising taxes and housing prices (Balabanidis, Patatouka & Siatitsa, 2013; Alexandri & Janoschka, 2018). Family strategies focused on purchasing houses with bank loans, which were obtained quite easily as this was not possible only through the household income (Balabanidis, Patatouka & Siatitsa, 2013). Also, the households where two breadwinners existed grew from 1993 until the beginning of crisis from 42% to 54% (Daskalopoulou, 2016). In 2007, however, the limits of development became apparent, as the first signs of recession arose. By 2010, the effects of the global financial crisis became more tangible in everyday life.

In the years prior to the crisis, a change in relation to interfamilial dependence occurred: Single-parent, strictly nuclear and non-relatives households appeared in urban centres, and gender roles slowly changed, both outside and inside households, with a strong tendency towards female emancipation and autonomy (Allen et al., 2004). This period, when people could sustain their favourable housing solution financially and socially, lasted only a few years, until the recession hit in 2008. The economic downturn and resulting austerity measures led people to return to family housing provisions.

## **CRISIS**

The Greek crisis was a sovereign debt crisis that resulted in the implementation of austerity policies and strict budgetary cuts that affected housing and threatened Greece's 'fragile social fabric' (Matthijs, 2014, 105). As a result, distress arose in the housing market as well as an increase in unemployment, and households' and citizens' impoverishment and

indebtedness (Naldini & Jurado, 2013; Pinto & Guerra, 2013; Serracant, 2015; Siatitsa & Annunziata, 2017; Alexadri & Janoschka, 2018). Crisis and especially austerity measures brought up also a stop in the women's entrance to well-paid jobs in the public sector (Daskalopoulou, 2016). Young women (15-24 years old) were especially affected by the crisis, with 61 percent of them registering as unemployed in 2013 and 47,4% in 2018 (Worldbank, 2019). This consequently led to an increasingly conservative and gendered division of labour (Vaiou, 2014b).

During the crisis, the main pillar of Greek society (i.e. the family) regained its power and hegemony over dependent members. Even if the Greek family was slowly progressing towards new norms and practices, it is again still significant for an individual's emotional and physical development, with the enduring importance of care and intergenerational practices persisting throughout an individual's life (Valentine & Hughes, 2011; Moreno & Mari-Klose, 2013).

Moreover, austerity reinforced gender binaries, heteronormative attitudes and conservatism in social life in Greece (Eleftheriadis, 2015). This statement is validated by everyday public manifestations. Violence against women has increased in the past decade<sup>11</sup>, and an extremist discourse has been propagated by conservative part of the population and especially Golden Dawn<sup>12</sup>. This formation promotes sexist models, behaviours and discourses in the name of aggressive masculinity (Avdela and Psarra, 2012). Women, according to Golden Dawn's discourse, should stay at home, look after the family and stop taking men's jobs (Athanasίου, 2012; Vaiou, 2014a). Their ideas and aggressive behaviours find fertile ground among Greek citizens (Vaiou, 2014b). Simultaneously, the regained power of the family as the main welfare agent has reinforced certain heteronormative gender roles imposed by its gendered expectations on the beneficiaries.

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<sup>11</sup> As Vaiou (2014a) is explaining, the data is rare but results from the SOS helpline of the General Secretariat of Equality, in combination with data from other sources, demonstrate a considerable increase of physical and verbal violence against women.

<sup>12</sup> Golden Dawn is a neo-nazi political party that is part of the parliament since 2012 that orchestrates racist, sexist and homophobic campaigns and raids (Eleftheriadis 2015).

## METHODOLOGY

Methodologically, this paper is part of a wider research project and involves 40 participants, Greeks, who have lived or are currently residing in Athens, Greece. Even though the focus of the wider project is on young people (27 to 34 years old - following the indications of scholars who have focused on youths in Southern Europe (Naldini & Jurado, 2013; Ministerio de Vivienda, 2010; Moreno and Mari-Klose, 2013; Minguez, 2016; Bricocoli and Sabatinelli, 2016)), as this paper researches the gender dimension of family housing strategies including, the age limit is not strict. Therefore, research partners up to age of 45 are included as long as their life stories involve clear gendered attributes of housing support, strategies and practices.

This research employs a qualitative approach with the analytical framework of housing pathway as a core. Housing pathway is regarded the succeeding household forms and housing practices that individuals experience over time and space (Clapham, 2002). One of the key concept for the pathway approach are the impact of categorical identities (gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity) on the relation between the individual perception of the self and, ours and others' expectations of appropriate behaviours (ibid.). In that way, these identities may impact the family housing support. Thus, this analytical framework was the most adequate in order to explore the gender identity impact on housing.

The core method of research comprised longitudinal in-depth interviews, focusing on the respondents' and their households' housing pathways through the loose format of their narratives of family life. The interviews were carried out between January 2017 and January 2018 in Athens, Greece. The snowball sampling method from multiple initial contacts was employed for the interviews. Also, an interview was conducted with an employee of the Hellenic Ministry of Labour, Social Insurance and Social Solidarity that deals with housing issues. All interviews were conducted in Greek, and the quotes included in this paper are the product of the author's efforts in translation.

Additionally, participant and non-participatory observation were carried out in various households. These observations although complementary proved to be rich in data and provided further insight into the dimension of gender in Greek households.

## **FAMILY HOUSING SUPPORT**

Ernestene Friedl's (1959, 49) account of rural family life in a small Greek village, Vasilika, in the 1950's still applies to the contemporary Greek family:

‘What is considered success? The essential family obligation is to maintain a ratio between property and children, such as to enable each child, when the property is divided into substantially equal shares among all the children, to maintain in his turn and for his family a decent standard of living.’

Greek families try to support their members by employing housing strategies that aim to cover the needs of said members. Housing support can be viewed as an intergenerational gift, and according to Schwartz (1967, p. 11), gift-giving is an act of guilt that ‘may be an important component of many exchanges.’ This is true in some cases of intergenerational home exchange, as older Greeks tend to have a sense of guilt, having had more chances to accumulate wealth during *their* productive years (i.e. during the 1980s and 1990s) than their children currently have (Eurostat, 2012). This guilt may force them to provide for their children.

There are two main categories of family housing support – namely, financial and material (in-kind). Financial support is given in the form of money that is put towards purchasing a house or a regular, long-term allowance of an unspecified amount. The former involves the investment in a property so that the young member can use it as a permanent residence or investment.

The long-term allowance constitutes regular financial support, without which most of the interviewees stressed that they would not be able to make ends meet. However, they are not always acknowledging this support as housing related even though it is necessary for them to sustain their living standards.

With material support, the family grants younger members access to unused accommodation for a period of time (rent-free) or offers it as a gift to them. Another practice of material support, which, in this research, was regarded by beneficiaries as a short-term solution, is younger members cohabiting with parents, grandparents or single (usually elderly) relatives in the latter's rented or owned accommodation.

## **THE GENDER DIMENSION**

‘[...] the notion that gender is constructed suggests a certain determinism of gender meanings inscribed on anatomically differentiated bodies, where those bodies are understood as passive recipients of an inexorable cultural law’ (Butler, 1999, 12).

Housing practices, strategies and support are impacted upon by the gender of the practitioner, as gender performativity bears collective ambitions that are registered in the social environment (Bourdieu, 2001). In terms of the gender dimension within families, the story of Alexandra (29) is presented. Alexandra faces typical prospects for a Greek daughter:

In general, my mother has imprinted the attitude [that] ‘I’m not living away from my parents. I am with my parents, and if I go, they will be very devastated.’ [...] My mother wanted to be with her mother and her father. I always wanted to leave. I liked very much living alone. [...] She had thrown at me that ‘When you get married...’ [and I said] ‘Mum, I can’t, I don’t even have a job that could support me and my child and my family in general’ [and she said] ‘Don’t you care [that] we are here? It is ok, just “make for me” grandchildren, I will give you the house downstairs [that is her property] to live [in] underneath my house and [I will provide you with] any food you need. We will be here [and] we will be together!’ [...] and I tell her [that] I don’t like this thought [...] I wouldn’t like to live like this. [...] Today I told her that ‘When I come back in the evening I want to talk to you [...] and she told me ‘Ouch, I understand that [...] you are going to cohabitate in someplace else. This is not good for me. You are going to abandon Mummy.’

Alexandra’s mother expresses many imaginaries attributed to daughters and family welfare imprinted on housing practices.

Indeed, family and home are two interconnected, gendered concepts (Blunt & Dowling, 2006). Accordingly, family support for housing can demonstrate certain gender differences. To begin with, *prika* (dowry), a strongly gendered term, is used as a term to refer to parental donations and house-gifting. When this term is used for women who have received housing donations from their families, it is usually done in a humorous way, recognising the anachronism but accepting it all the same. To best highlight this gift-giving, I present the narrative of Apolon (34):

If I wasn’t going to Canada, I would have stayed here, in the [empty] house of my father, which he gifted to my sister as a ‘wedding present.’ [...] He granted this house to help her support in that way [sic] also [my] nephew [her child].

Even though the *prika* system was forbidden by the progressive family law of 1983, the culture of traditional gender roles prevails today and impacts upon family housing strategies for young women. Indeed, the provisions for women focus on providing their future families with a house, whereas for young men it is a form of investment, as support for them is not solely focused on their future families. In the case of Dimitra (30), her parents gave her an apartment inside the family *polykatoikia* so that she could live with her long-term boyfriend. For Dimitra’s brother, their parents do not plan to grant him a specific property, but they are eager to support him. Accordingly, for Aris (30), as a son, the plans are vague:

We have a plot [...] that [my] parents bought [...] they found it really cheap, and they got it as an investment in the beginning of their marriage. [...] Concerning the sharing, it will 'come' to me. Because Mum had in her mind that I will be able to build something there.

These interviews highlight another attitude towards sons: It is anticipated that they will contribute to the 'construction' of their own housing solutions. Thus, they tend to live further away from their parents than daughters do. Young (2005) criticizes that the physical activity of construction is still perceived as a man's activity, whereas a woman's duty is to preserve and nurture a sense of home within that which is constructed. This perception also defines housing rights inside the family without taking into account needs and wills. This notion can also be linked to various family strategies, since, in agricultural communities, a daughter accepted her inheritance in the form of a *prika* (cash for housing acquisition in a city or as part of the family's property), whereas the son had to wait to receive his portion of the family property after the death of the family patriarch (although granted rights were often given beforehand). The son was also expected to work on the family land and simultaneously expand the family property (Allen, 1985; Paxson, 2004).

The story of Alex (27) echoes Aris's in relation to men building their own home. In this extract, he describes the structure of his parental house in terms of family housing strategies:

Here, essentially, in the basement, we, the kids were living [temporarily, during puberty and early adolescence], the parents in [*sic*] the first floor and [...] the rest of the floors were intended for my sisters, when they would be married. [...] In [*sic*] the ground floor and first floor, essentially the family is living, and then the first sister [will live] on the second and half of the third floor, and the other one on the third and fourth. [...] The [house of my first sister] was not rented and almost not finished for five years. They wanted it from the beginning [to be] clearly hers in order to 'enter' [it] when she gets married. [...] For me and my brother, theoretically they had a plot outside of X [the city that his parents live in]; my brother already took half of which [*sic*] and built his own house. The other half, theoretically, is mine.

It is apparent here that housing provisions for women usually coincide with their marriage and formation of a new household. This process highlights the persistent culture of the dowry as a form of housing provision for the future family of the daughter. Alex's story also demonstrates the tendency of parents to have mapped the locations of housing solutions for their daughters.

Young women are usually expected to live close to the parental home also for reasons of kinship so that the parents can assist them in relation to their household needs and receive anticipated care. When Irakleia (30) was asked to elaborate on her family's housing plans, she reported the following:

Because the [parental] house in X [Attica area] is big, and now my brothers are away in different places [...] there is space for us [her and her fiancé] to stay there.

Therefore, we have been thinking [that] because the [parental] house can be separated in[to] two apartments, we are thinking to go maybe and live in one of these two apartments while my parents will live in the other one. [...]

The existence of an available property tends to be more crucial for daughters in terms of where they will settle down. This could be connected to the feeling of insecurity that society has imposed on women in contrast to men, who are allowed to be more ambitious and take more risks in order to pursue their goals. The above characteristics reflect the specific gender roles that women perform in the family, where familial generations remain interdependent, especially through care services and family welfare (Phillipson, 1998; Valentine, 2006). This will resist until there is the economic potential of welfare changes, that will provide women with autonomy in domestic and family life together with a social and cultural progress.

There is also another stereotypical and biased gender attitude towards young single women whose parents are preoccupied with their 'situation' and living arrangements. To highlight this process, I here introduce the narrative of Olga (42), who has returned home for a short period as 'a rest from financial agony,' among other reasons. Her parents were satisfied that she had returned, as they worried about her being single, and they believe it necessary for her to stay with them so that she is not lonely: 'They considered me also single, thus, it was even easier for them to tell me [that it was] 'for the best [to return home], not to have expenses.'

Class of the family of the participants did not seem to have a great impact on their female roles but financial ability did. Almost all of the young women interviewed were working, but they relied on family assistance. This was either because they could not afford a house by themselves or they had invested their income in other activities or even saving it for future housing possibilities. Moving out of the house and into a property not associated with the family usually coincides with cohabitation (in more modern families) or even engagement (for the more conservative families). In a lot of cases granting of a family owned house was offered in order for them to move with their long-term partner. The women interviewed were expected to have a family and settle down, even though they were well-educated and may have wanted to pursue a career. In some cases, economic and social success were seen as signs that a woman was established and could now focus on having a family. Upper-class families can be even more strict about the relationship status of their young daughters so that they are more respected in social circles. These families seem entitled to explain the marital status of their children especially if they offered to them a family property to move in.

Family class impacted however on the available housing solutions for the interviewed young women: If a family does not have the means to offer accommodation to a female family member, then she is obliged to stay with the family and form a more integral element of the kinship network. If the young woman is provided with other solutions, autonomous living may be an option, where she can escape the obligations associated with bonds of kinship and specific gender and family roles. However, if a young person accepts family support, he/she is obliged to accept criticism or suggestions concerning his/her life plans.

Obviously, crisis is more feasible in lower class women and especially of older age (see Vaiou, 2014a).

The family who is eager to support its members may impose a conventional and heteronormative life trajectory on them. They tend to overlook the personal desires of the recipient if said goals do not involve family and kinship. Young people then have to resonate indefinitely why they are not following a prefabricated family-centric trajectory. Moreover, Greek families tend to impose on their children certain prototypes for social behaviour. These prototypes are created according to their ideals and norms. This means that young family members cannot take risks or decide on their own life path. They are deemed unable to live independently and are presumed to be the property of the family without equal rights inside the family house (Kerentzis, 2015).

All in all, family housing support does not come without its obligations, and each generation has to negotiate between traditional and modern duties within the family arena (Paxson, 2004). Additionally, the 'continuing balance of debt [...] insures that the relationship between the two continue, for gratitude will always constitute a part of the bond linking them' (Schwartz, 1967, 8; see also Gouldner, 1960). This debt, created by the provision of housing, is expected to be repaid through care services. This ensures that a continuous intra-familial imbalance of debt remains. This imbalance also serves to maintain the functioning of Greek society. Family support improves social stability, as the Greek state is not sufficiently active to address or remedy the social needs of its citizens.

## **FOREVER CARERS**

Home is a site of caregiving, especially through kinship and women's devotion to it (Papataxiarchis, 1991; Blunt & Dowling, 2006). The rhetoric of the patriarchal breadwinner versus the female nurturer produces specific gender norms that are imposed on women and lead them to carry out unpaid work in order to cover the needs of the extended family. Taking care of the elderly, children or anyone in need within the family unit has liberated the state from its obligations (Vaiou, 1996; Moreno & Mari-Klose, 2013). Today, the participation of women in the labour force is high, with 45,28 % employed in 2018 (World Bank, 2018). However, female family members remain the main care-providers for their family and extended family. Also, unemployment for women may result in compulsory care work inside the family covering for another member who is working (Lewis & Ostner, 1994; Trifiletti, 1999).

Saraceno and Keck (2010, 677) state that if a country's degree of 'familialism by default'<sup>13</sup> is high, so too are the intergenerational responsibilities and accordingly its 'gender specificity, with women being prevalently responsible for care and men for financial support.' Before the crisis, there was a growing phenomenon of informal and paid care-

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<sup>13</sup> The welfare regime where there are no publicly provided alternatives to, or financial support for family care (Saraceno & Keck, 2010).

work carried out by female immigrants, meaning that care was externalised (Moreno & Mari-Klose, 2013). However, the crisis and related dismantling of public services, including care for children and the elderly, affected women in two ways. The female immigrant workers in these services (the care workforce consisted of 79 % women in 2009) lost their jobs, as people in need of care could no longer afford them (Vaiou, 2014b). Correspondingly, Greek women could no longer receive any formal support in their kinship obligations (Vaiou, 2014a, 2014b). Thus, women in Greek society were forced to offer unpaid assistance.

In the interviews with the participants of this study, there were numerous occasions where the gendered provision of care was demonstrated and linked with housing support. This is clear in the proximity of related/kinship households. The extracts below reveal this tendency through the geography of kinship households. Aris (30) and Liza (45) state:

When my grandma fell and they [with my aunt] had to come from the village [to Athens] in order for my mother to take care of them, they lived in one of the two small houses that are close to us [...] my grandma with my aunt with Down syndrome. [...] They were living there so as [sic] my mother can [sic] go up and down from our house – that [house] is right next to us in the same [family] plot – so she can take care of them. *Aris*

I had some other cousins that [sic] also my grandma should 'raise' [take care of]. They were a bit younger than us, three–four years. [...] They were living in Chalandri [an Athenian neighbourhood]. Therefore, our mum took us and brought us to Chalandri in order for the [sic] grandma to cope with the [needs] of four children and four grandchildren, two couples [sic] of cousins. *Liza*

Through these stories, it was evident that older members typically offer unpaid care and material housing support to younger family members (Paxson, 2004). In these cases, housing proximity is crucial and impacts on the settlement decisions of the household in need.

Accordingly, young women who want to start a family often choose to be close to the parental house, especially to their mothers in order to receive support in their family and house obligations. This trend has been obvious in housing strategies since the first anthropological research in this field was conducted in Greece. This was stressing that 'chances are good that the house or apartment [given as a dowry] is going to be located in a neighbourhood populated by relatives and friends of the woman's family' (Allen, 1985, 11). As an example of this, Mitsos's (33) parents wanted to move to the countryside, but they felt obliged to stay where they were because of family obligations:

It is the fact that my brother is here that [sic] has two little children and especially when they were even younger, my mother babysat them, and she was helping in general, because they were both working, my brother and my sister in law. The most important reason for my parents to be here [in Athens] is my nephews, their grandchildren.

As Mitsos continues his narration about the housing strategies of his family, another important aspect arises:

Basically, my parents helped my brother to take a house [...] essentially, they bought the house [...] with their savings. [...] There, essentially, really close to the house that they bought, it existed [*sic*] the parental house of my brother's wife that is also close to us. [...] It is really close, even to walk to.

Although the house was a gift from the husband's parents, it is in close proximity to the wife's parental house. Thus, the intra-familial care network includes all three households. Additionally, through the micro-geography of households, another important issue is discovered; daughters need to be proximate to their parents in order to take care of them. This is seen in the case of Tasos (32), who explains why he and his fiancé chose a certain Athenian area in which to settle down:

Because the woman [Tasos' fiancé] is from here, in order to be close to her mother and dad [it was] for them to have someone to help them.

Young women are defined by specific obligations that include receiving care and offering care services. Thus, they have responsibilities when it comes to their housing decisions due to their roles as future mothers and carers. Women are expected to make decisions that will allow them to fulfil their gender role inside the family. This is strengthened by the fact that even before the crisis, Greece lagged behind other European countries in formal care for children, with just 15.7 percent of children under three in formal care in 2004 (Moreno & Mari-Klose, 2013).

As Valentine and Hughes (2011, 131) explain: 'Adult parent-child relationships are essentially about the continued negotiation of a balance between dependence and independence. This usually gradually shifts over time from the parent caring for the child, to the adult child caring for the older parent.' The maternal sacrifice of the previous generation will be reciprocated in the future as the receiver takes the role of generator of kinship sentiment and this refers specifically to women (Papataxiarxhis, 1991). Gender performativity also involves moral responsibility (Paxson, 2004), or, to paraphrase Massey and McDowell (in Massey, 1994), capitalism, crisis and patriarchy interrelate and produce the gendered care responsibilities of women. Responsibilities related to the family, such as birth, childcare and elderly care, are considered the moral concerns of women as daughters, mothers and grandmothers. These moral concerns constitute a lifelong role.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Housing in Greece have always been a matter of family welfare. The absence of direct housing policies functions as an indirect policy that promotes specific characteristics in the reality of Greek housing. These characteristics are defined by the strong familistic culture that substitutes welfare. The ongoing inadequacy of the Greek welfare state and the financial insecurity of neo-liberal economies dictate that many are increasingly dependent on family support as there is no welfare state to fall back on. Family is pushed to the forefront, especially in relation to housing. The family acts as a 'buffer between the state and the individual' (Valentine, Skelton & Butler 2003, 483).

Housing support is offered by Greek families, but its provision comes with a manual of social behaviour and gender roles. The parents who have managed to acquire a house and later succeed in implementing housing strategies in order to support their children are the real 'patriarchs'. Their rule is valid as long as they support their children, and they usually expect a conventional, linear life trajectory from their children. 'Personal autonomy, within families, can only be achieved when social and sexual rights are strongly guaranteed at a formal level and can be realized at a practical level' (O'Connor, 1993, 512). However, in contemporary Greece there is lack of these guarantees and consequently personal autonomy in a degree.

Through this limited research focusing on attitudes about current and future housing solutions for both men and women, differences between housing support for male and female family members were highlighted. These differences are based on the gender roles that they are expected to fulfil. The differentiated strategies involve both the current and future housing solutions for members who are part of a lifelong circle of intergenerational care and support.

The gift of a house transmits the social imaginary that the giver has for the receiver (Schwartz, 1968). This is evident in the patterns of family housing support in Greece. When one considers gender in relation to housing, 'masculine' and 'feminine' housing solutions can be found in family housing provision, similar to the gendered presents that girls and boys are expected to receive. In this vein, gifts serve as generators of identity in the same way that houses do, and their acceptance means the recipient's acceptance of an identity imposed by the provider (ibid.). Thus, the heteronormative life trajectory that Greek parents imagine for their children is depicted in Greek housing provision. This self-regulation of housing needs in Greece reproduces a strong familistic culture and related gender roles that are essential for its preservation. Also, generational power relations and hierarchies prevail and define the members' relationships and balances.

To conclude, this paper has offered insights into the role of family housing support as a gendered identity generator as well as the gender politics of austerity in the context of Greek housing. It is necessary to address the gender imbalances within Greek families and society as well as the need for a change in cultural and gendered obligations and demands.

Therefore, there is need for further research in the gender dimension of housing support as well as the gendered impact of austerity in different local contexts and welfare regimes. Simultaneously, the welfare state, should provide institutional structures that can remedy structured gender inequalities. Last but not least, housing policies should be introduced that will remedy structured gender inequalities and support alternative housing solutions, such as cohabiting with non-family members and housing co-operatives, that address individual needs and insulate young family members from family dependency.

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## PAPER 2

### **When housing is provided, but only if you remain in the ‘closet’. The impact of sexual identity on housing practices for LGBTQ+ Greek people.**

#### ABSTRACT

This article explores the impact of sexual orientation on the housing practices of individuals self-identified as LGB+<sup>14</sup> in Greece in connection to family support. During the current financial crisis, opportunities for acquiring a secure housing solution especially for young people are scarce, and families are increasingly pressured to support their members. Nonetheless, support comes ‘with strings attached’, and this includes parents’ imaginary and will for conventional lifestyles and heteronormative life trajectories for their children, which may clash with the desires of LGB+ family members. Indeed, the Greek family, which is the main welfare agent in many aspects, including housing, reacts towards LGB+ members who do not conform to the typical binary of sexual identities. This conflict can have implications on housing support as well. In this paper, the direct and indirect impact of sexual orientation on the housing prospects of LGB+ are explored in connection with the family provision and the Greek familistic culture through 16 life stories.

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<sup>14</sup> At the time that the research was conducted my research partners were self-defined as Lesbians, Gay, Bisexual and Queer, thus considering also the fluidity sexual identity as well as the plethora of them I will use the more inclusive abbreviation of LGB+.



## INTRODUCTION

*Λένε πως ο δρόμος για την κόλαση είναι στρωμένος με τις αγνότερες προθέσεις των εντός αυτής εγκλωβισμένων. Κανέναν τους δεν τ'όχε σκοπό να πάει εκεί – το αντίθετο μάλιστα – και όμως εκεί κατέληξε. Και λένε πως την κόλαση του ανθρώπου την αποτελούν οι άλλοι άνθρωποι, φυσικά οι συνάνθρωποί του.*

*They say that the road to hell is paved with the purest intentions of the entrapped within. None of them had the intention of going there – the opposite existed – and yet he/she ended up there. And they say that human's hell is constituted by other people, naturally the fellow human beings*

(Ioannou, G. (1979, May 26) To Amfi, *Anti* 136)

In Greece, housing provision was always mainly a family obligation that was facilitated by family housing strategies exploiting the particularities of Greek labour market and welfare. Even after the global financial crisis and the austerity that was implemented in Greece for the last decade, family housing support is dominant and, in many cases, the only solution towards a housing solution for people employed in the local economy. Simultaneously, this support presupposes family control. People who do not comply with the Greek family's conservative imaginary for their life trajectory may face direct and/or indirect implications on their housing provision.

Particularly, in Greece the choice to 'come out'<sup>15</sup> or not seems to be strategic for LGB+ in order to manage their housing opportunities that are provided to them by their families. In the process of 'coming out', the geographical attribute is crucial, given that in different contexts, various cultural features affect the response and integration of the group (e.g. Bell and Valentine 1995; Di Felicianantonio & Gadehla 2016, Gorman-Murray 2007, 2009; Lewis 2012, 2013; Nash and Gorman-Murray 2014). This process is always under negotiation according to different places and it needs to be framed relationally.

The gender dimensions of housing concerning the hegemonic binary has been covered to a substantial extent by the feminist critiques of home (Blunt 2003; Blunt and Dowling 2006; Domosh and Seager 2001; Mallett 2004), but LGB+ domesticities that render a different lens of focus remain under-investigated. The main countries that have conducted considerable research about the housing conditions of the LGB+ community are Australia (e.g. Gorman – Murray 2006a, 2006b, 2008a, 2008b, 2015), the USA and the UK (especially for elderly and minors) (e.g. Valentine 1993; Bell and Valentine 1995; Hunter 2008; Adelman 2006; Gratwick et al. 2014, Addis et al 2009; King and Cronin 2016).

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<sup>15</sup> Coming out here is defined as the process of disclosure of the sexual orientation of oneself, moving away from the heteronormative expression of sexuality.

Meanwhile, the dearth of information about the housing difficulties and domesticity of LGB+, at least that in the English language, in conservative Southern Europe, remains limited (Di Felicianantonio 2015; 2016). Moreover, the process of coming out in the home or under the heteronormative Southern European family regime that provides home is also understudied (Di Felicianantonio 2018; Paternotte 2018). Human geography tends to focus on the homophobic reactions of heteronormative families and their responses concerning space, whereas the supportive response of families has only rarely been studied (ibid; Valentine, Skelton and Butler 2003; Gorman–Murray 2008a; Suen 2015). Therefore, this paper aims to fill this gap contributing to geographies of home, family and sexuality and research the ‘sexual politics of austerity’ concerning housing in the Greek context.

Thus, it is important to investigate how the conservative family-centric Greek culture, in combination with the fact that family support is the main support for young people’s housing, impacts the housing practices of LGB+ citizens. Also, it is interesting to observe how LGB+ in Greece manage their sexual identity disclosure in order not to implicate the housing support they are receiving

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. The first section constitutes a brief introduction to Greek family welfare, housing culture and crisis. In the next theoretical section, the LGB+ identity’s negotiations in Greek society and especially inside the home is discussed. The second part of this section elaborates the concept of coming out to family. After the theoretical framework, the methodology of this research is displayed. In the succeeding section, through research partners’ housing pathways and life stories, the discussion initially focuses on the direct and indirect impact of non-conventional identities on LGB+ people’s housing practices. This is followed by a discussion about the family support as identity generator and the strategic decision of coming out or not in order to not to “disrupt” the housing support together with a conclusion regarding the main outcomes and the future research need.

## GREEK FAMILY WELFARE AND HOUSING

*'[...] the only truly poor person is one who has no family.'* (Moreno and Mari-Klose 2013, 495).

Greece is characterized by the welfare pattern of 'familialism by default' where 'there are neither publicly provided alternatives to nor support for family care' (Saraceno & Keck, 2010, 676). This is also evident in the extremely low coverage of residential provision and care services by the state. One could argue that the Greek welfare state was never active enough to cover the needs of its citizens. To this day there is no developed, cohesive social housing policy, as the state limits its provision for shelter only to extreme cases of homelessness (Balabanidis, Patatouka & Siatitsa, 2013). Housing policies in Greece were always mainly indirect economic indicators that aimed to promote certain housing practices, especially the self-regulation of housing needs through the support of the family and kin, with a focus on homeownership (Mantouvalou, 1985; Leontidou, 1990; Allen et al., 2004).

Moreover, the 'strong family ties, emphasis on pensions, secure jobs during active life, high intra-family transfers in crucial phases of the life cycle' and high percentages of homeownership constituted a rigid system in this Mediterranean country (Ferrera 2010, 171). This system depended upon the traditionally male breadwinner who benefited from good job opportunities during his active years and significant pensions afterwards, with which he could support the family and kin (Naldini & Jurado, 2013). Hence, Greek families tend to draft strategic plans to support their members in their housing pathway with any available means, prioritizing the need to provide direct means for access to homeownership. Nevertheless, as this is not always possible, alternative practices are employed especially during the current financial crisis that impacted the citizens' well-being.

Crisis and austerity measures reorganized housing and everyday life in Greece. The European Central Bank, the European Commission and the International Monetary Fund (also known as the Troika) dictated austerity measures that constituted the preconditions of the three bailout packages received by Greece during the global financial crisis (Papadopoulos & Roumpakis, 2013). The austerity measures imposed deep cuts in the total public expenditure, which impacted the formation of households and the related housing strategies that families adopted in order to face the challenges (Naldini & Jurado, 2013; Pinto & Guerra, 2013; Serracant, 2015). Also, since 2012, Greece has had some of the highest unemployment rates among OECD countries at all educational levels, and today it has the second highest percentage of unemployment of the total labour force among them (19.5%) while the percentage of youth unemployment is 43.6%.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, the government reduced unemployment benefits and the criteria to receive them became stricter (Zambarloukou, 2015).

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<sup>16</sup> <https://doi.org/10.1787/19991266>

According to this research, the crisis does not appear directly in the housing pathways of people in Greece, as families struggle to cover housing needs. Nonetheless, hectic and precarious employment opportunities lead to different housing practices and postponed life decisions. Family support becomes almost one-way in a country with a precarious labour market and an absent welfare state. However, family support presupposes that the receivers of the support should 'obey' the rules and imaginaries that the family attributes to them, as the acceptance of support presupposes the acceptance of control. As long as the well-being of these young people is dependent on family solutions, the familial wealth reinforces the existing social inequity between those who hold property wealth and those who do not.

## LGB+, HOME AND THE “CLOSET” IN GREECE

*Anyone who has maintained a single position over a long period of time knows that the body demands consistent postural variation if it is to remain comfortable and capable of good role performance. Privacy enables the person to enact a variety of non-public postures and this prepares him physically for public life (Schwartz, 1968, 745)*

Family in Greek culture is associated with home; these two concepts are substantially interrelated, as the home is where a family is formed and maintained (Mallett 2004). The family home is where individuals' identities and collective family identities are expressed; therefore, there is a continuous renegotiation through generations about all of them (Valentine, Skelton and Butler 2003). Nonetheless, the family home is neither merely a safe shelter nor a hostile place per se (Mallett 2004), as both good and bad experiences, pain and happiness create a stained glass of emotions and affirmations.

Inside the home, there is a profound naturalisation of the heteronormativity which accordingly imposes certain behaviours. In the context of Southern Europe, the family home is the base of the asymmetrical heteropatriarchal family, which has certain heterosexual and gendered relations. Therefore, LGB+ members should suppress, in some cases, their non-normative sexuality and lifelong plans while they are still dependent on their families. In other words, the contemporary heterosexual family home formed in Greece may 'exclude' LGB+ members because of the socio-sexual power relations that are the dominant (ibid.).

Greece is one of the first-mover states in the European Union that are supposed to implement necessary modernised social reforms; however, domestic factors, especially state, economy and religious<sup>17</sup> ones, delay the policy reforms that the country has to undertake (Ayoub, 2015). The Orthodox Church, in particular, has retained its considerable influence on society and promoted, like the dominant ideology, the heterosexual family as the core structure of the society (Allen et al., 2004). The support to the institution of the family and its welfare frees the state from offering care, housing and social protection support. According to the international Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (European Region of the ILGA, 2017) report about Greece, there are incidents where the church is against LGB+ concerning basic human rights. Obviously, other forms of family outside of the heteronormative model could harm this sensitive equilibrium.

Simultaneously, as the crisis in Greece is evolving, the violent manifestations of police forces against socially marginalised groups increased as well. In parallel, the 'fascization' of society and the power of Golden Dawn, the Greek neo-Nazi party, are increasing. This formation has been part of the parliament since 2012 and promotes homophobia and sexism, praises heteronormativity while calling non-heteronormative people the 'shame of the nation' (Eleftheriadis, 2015). As Eleftheriadis (ibid, 1037) explained, 'Austerity reinforces gender

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<sup>17</sup>The Orthodox Church has aggressively opposed EU regulations concerning rights to non-normative sexual preferences (Ayoub 2015).

binaries and heteronormative domination in all aspects of social life', and this has implications in the daily life of LGB+ individuals in Greece.

Concerning the legal framework, Greece retains protection only for the grounds of 'sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression'<sup>18</sup> (European Region of the ILGA, 2017, 109) with regard to employment and does not offer specific coverage for other forms of discrimination. This means that concerning housing, LGB+ people who face discrimination are not protected per se.

In Greece, however, there is no LGB+ significant representation amongst the homeless population like in the USA and the UK (Hunter, 2008). Societies that face this problem attempt to offer adequate welfare services for this social group, which suffers from homelessness, abusive behaviours from their families and others, and financial problems (ibid.). Meanwhile, in Greece, citizens rely on family-based assistance; therefore, the danger of homelessness is influenced mainly by the ability of a family to support its members and the will of LGB+ to hide or suppress their identity and life plans in order not to implicate the support if the family disapproves them. The above cultural characteristics of Greek society force a related coming-out approach to its LGB+ citizens.

## COMING OUT IN GREECE

As it was mentioned in the previous section Greece is a family-centric country that rely on the family and kin networks for the coverage of citizens' needs. Therefore, because of this heteronormative social and home environment, people hesitate to come out, especially to their families.

The coming out process is established as a critical moment in which an LGB+ individual is subjected to disclosure or rejection and concealment of their sexual identities, which can lead to negative emotional and social responses (Valentine, Skelton & Butler, 2003; Suen, 2015; Gorman-Murray, 2008a). During this procedure, people negotiate new balances in their homes and in the family/kinship, which may impact the financial and emotional support they are receiving (Valentine, Skelton & Butler, 2003). The process is typically irreversible, as the member's identity is changed during the disclosure into one that contradicts all or most of the ideals that the parents and other relatives had established for them.

Home is an experience that can be impacted by the sexual identity of the inhabitant and especially the strategic decision to disclose or hide it. Accordingly, the housing pathway is affected by the fact and the related decisions especially when the housing solutions are provided by people that carry their own imaginary about 'appropriate identity'. In that way, in Greece, the housing practices of LGB+ people can be impacted by their disclosure.

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<sup>18</sup> Gender identity is the gender role that every person performs regardless of anatomical sex, whereas sexual orientation concerns the gender or sex to which a person is attracted to in connection with his/her gender (Hunter 2008; Galanou 2014).

Firstly, young adults in Greece tend to cohabit with their parents 72,3% of the young Greek population aged between 25 - 29 and 'fly away from the nest' in an older age than most of the European countries, over 30 years for men and over 27 years for women (EUROSTAT, 2015). Secondly, as young people count on family support to obtain housing solutions, they depend on family approval. To avoid compromising their housing strategies, LGB+ have to negotiate strategically the disclosure of their identities.

However, coming out is not always even a 'choice' for LGB+ people in Greece. Conservative Greek society still resists the acceptance of non-heteronormativity. Families can feel disgraced and tend not to disclose their children's sexual orientation for fear of marginalisation of the whole family, thereby putting the LGB+ children again 'into the closet' and thus rendering the closet 'a collective space of concealment' (Valentine, Skelton & Butler 2003, p.493). Nevertheless, in most of the cases in this research, when people came out, there was a delayed part-acceptance and integration into the family. After disclosure or an indirect acknowledgment of their children's non-heteronormative love life, most parents will ignore or deny the existence of a non-heterosexual subjectivity in the family.

The above obstacles, in combination with the rising cost of living, significant decrease in income and the general socio-economic precariousness, 'dictate' LGB+ individuals to remain silent. They choose in a lot of cases to conform to the role of the heteronormative son or daughter experiencing a secret and separate social and sexual reality (Valentine, Skelton & Butler, 2003). Thereby, they are trapped in this inter-generational support reciprocity that involves housing solutions and personal life decisions.

## METHODOLOGY AND ETHICS

Firstly, this research utilised a combination of qualitative methods. In-depth analysis of the LGB+ community and their housing practices was conducted vis-a-vis family support or obstacles facing them. Secondly, the postmodern analytical framework of housing pathways as core was selected. The housing pathway approach analyses the sequence of the housing practices of the individual as part of/as a household and its interactions (Clapham 2002; 2005). This approach underlines the methodological importance of studying the 'life-course' as it aims to dynamically link the family and the household over time (Calvert 2010).

This research is based on in-person semi-structured interviews. Through narration, the interviewees verged his/her stories in relation to the focus of the research, thus revealing the impact of sexual orientation on family housing support and housing practices. The author initially recruited interviewees through multiple contacts and then invited additional participants through snowballing. Political and social syndicates for LGB+ people, activists, support groups and a drag show place were contacted for discovering research partners who could be interested in this study. The 16 interviewees ranged from 25 to 55 years in age, 11 under the age of 35 and 5 over that age, all residents of Athens, Greece, when the interviews were conducted.

All the interviewees self-identified as LGB+ at the time of the interview. The social background of the participants was wide-ranging in terms of the forms and socio-economic classes of their families, educational background and working statuses. However, the analysis of the class is problematic as a dissociation of it and material resources is faced in the context of the current financial crisis (Rodó-de-Zárate 2013). All interviews were conducted in person in Greek, and the quotes displayed in this paper are products of the author's effort for exact translation.

The interview recordings were listened multiple times to distinguish parts that were relevant to the research focus. Afterwards, transcribed interviews were coded to note the main topics that arose regarding the impact of sexuality on the housing practices of LGB+ people. In some cases, the author could contact again the research partners to clarify certain points of their stories.

Age of research partners	Closeted	Disclosed	Total
Number of participants	8	8	16
Currently enjoying familistic housing strategy	4	5	9
Currently housing wise autonomous	4	3	7
Supported by family to live by themselves at least once	8	7	15
Returning to the nest	3	5	8
Living with a partner	2	5	7

TABLE 1: The main characteristics of the research partners to improve the empirical analysis section's readability.

Also interviews with professionals were realized. A psychologist with private practice and work as volunteer was interviewed for determining whether there is a trend about LGB+ people facing housing difficulties because of their non-heteronormative personal lives. The independent authority of 'The Greek Ombudsman' was interviewed as well about this issue. Finally, a lawyer was consulted about the legal framework of protection for LGB+ people and their housing rights (if any).

Concerning the ethics of this research, all the information obtained will never be publicly disclosed in any way that may allow for identification of the participants. The quotes are accompanied with pseudonyms and real ages, statuses of coming out (open or closeted) and sexual orientations where appropriate. The attribute 'closeted' refers to situations where at least one parent does not know or acknowledge the sexual orientation of the LGB+ person.

## IMPACT OF THE LGB+ IDENTITY ON HOUSING AND FAMILY STRATEGIES

The participants in this research were significantly supported by family support for housing. At least one incident of direct/indirect family housing support was encountered in each collected story; there seems to be no particular age at which intergenerational support expires for family members.

The provision of housing for all the family members is essential and imposes the need for family housing strategies. To best highlight this process, the narrative of Anthimos (35, open) is introduced. He returned to his parental house after staying abroad for a period until a solution was provided:

My mother said to me, 'We will renovate the house [that grandmother used to live] for you to stay'. [...] Already, before I came [to Greece], we were discussing my housing situation because they [the parents] knew that I could not live with them forever.

Anthimos was open about his sexuality, and his parents were supportive and except for hosting him back home at first they planned and supported his future housing situation.

However, even parents who "disapprove" the sexual orientation of their children tend to provide alternative housing solutions. As Villi (lesbian, 25, open) explains, 'This was the reason [her sexual identity] that they found a place for me [and paid the rent]', referring to the fact that her father rented a house for her so that she can reside outside of the parental house and not 'impact' her younger sister with her personal life. Nevertheless, other relatives can also provide direct support, such as in the situation of Liza (45, open), who ended up living with her aunt. She decided to cohabit with her for financial reasons, and even though her aunt disapproved of Liza's personal life, she welcomed the idea of cohabitating and even stressed to Liza that they should have done it earlier.

In other cases, the support comes financially in the form of direct or indirect housing support. In the first case, parents and other relatives can offer the amount of money that is needed for a person to acquire a house or to cover the amount of the rent. Meanwhile, indirect housing support pertains to support that comes in the form of 'pocket money'. Even though it is not meant for the payment of rent, it is still a stable financial income that eases one's household difficulties. Olga (lesbian, 42, closeted) explained this procedure as follows:

(My) parents are supporting financially both of their children [herself and her brother] by providing 'pocket money'. [...] The pocket money is worth up to 400 euros for my brother and 200 for me. [...] Anything that remains [from parents' incomes], they give it to their children to survive.

This custom is not unfamiliar in Greek society, where parents tend to strive to better their children's lives by all means.

Another way by which a family can support its members is cohabitation. In many of the stories, the participants returned to their family homes after being away for a period of time regardless of whether they had come out or not. Parents usually welcome their children back home in various ways. According to Olga (42, closeted):

I decided to return to my parents. [...] they made me distinct breakfast each of them to please me [...] Back home for eight whole months with a certain social life and sexuality, being old, it was like a refuge. [...] a financial solution in order to think what I am going to do next...

However, the support is not always self-evident or is accompanied by specific rules that can limit a person's freedom.

Parents seem to support their children in every way they can with their available means. Nevertheless, there are also incidents where this support is disturbed by the disapproval of the sexual identity of the LGB+ person, or the support comes with certain suppressing rules because of it. There are two kinds of impact, namely, direct and indirect.

## **DIRECT IMPACT**

Only a few stories were collected from the participants about direct impact on housing practices. Villi (lesbian, 25, open), to start with, experienced a 'double impact' on her housing pathway because of her sexual orientation. In her own words,

It impacted. I think that one reason that my mother left and found a job away from Athens was my sexual orientation, because we did not get along after she found out about me, [...] and essentially, she did it to punish me, to have me live with my father [they are divorced] or maybe to punish him by having him fulfil his obligations towards me.

After the change of household, she faced another challenge from her father, to whom she was not directly disclosed,

My father [...] has a new family, and because I presume that they could listen to conversations on the phone, and they may not like all of this, and because I have a younger sibling. [...] They may have worried that... Yes... I do not know... I have never expressed all of this, so I cannot be certain, but I believe that basically, this was the reason that they found me a house, [...] but yes, I presume it was based [on the sexual orientation] the situation where I lived by myself, without ever being loudly expressed, but I believe it [that this was the reason].

Additionally, financial support and accordingly, housing coverage, can be terminated. Alex's (gay, 27, closeted) narrative emphasises the difficulties he encountered after his sibling found out about his personal life,

When my brother found out, he threw that back at me, sadly, saying, 'Me and dad are struggling to support you financially and', He didn't express it clearly, but maybe, like, he implied that 'You make us feel ashamed'. [...] I felt that my ego was hurt, especially by the way he threw that back at me. I would like to tell him that, 'Ok, if you are going to be throwing it back at me like that, I do not want your money at all, and keep them to yourself, [...] but I believe that if this hadn't happened [his brother finding out], they would have supported me a bit more. [...] If this [sudden disclosure] hadn't occurred, he may have supported me a bit more in a way.

Some of the respondents had to abandon their family homes to claim their identities, or were indirectly pushed to leave. When Liza (lesbian, 45, open) was asked to elaborate about her situation, she reported this episode,

[...] Because of my sexual orientation, I encountered some... one really peculiar act of practice from my mother—blackmailing. Let's say, it's like saying 'me or your girlfriend', but because I was really bonded with my mother, I was a 'mama's girl', she thought I would back down and stay with her, but I did not back down, and then, I went [moved out of the family house], because all of this should be done really quickly in order to prove to my mother that this is me, I am like this and I do not do it to disturb anyone or...and because it was a life decision for me to put my foot down about this matter.

All in all, although there were no incidents resulting in homelessness, there were violent changes in the living arrangements of LGB+ people in connection to their coming out or indirect disclosure as the family who supported them did not approve their personal life. Nevertheless, the indirect impacts can be also traumatic.

## **INDIRECT IMPACT – IS IT INDIRECT?**

Sexual orientation also imposes 'indirect' implications on housing, especially concerning the limitation to the freedom of living a non-heteronormative personal life as long as people are enjoying housing solutions provided by their families.

### *'Freedom in personal life' limitations*

Support can be accompanied by a code of (heteronormative) behaviour, such as in the story of Liza (45, open). She was hosted after she was pushed to leave her house by her partner's mother, who required her and her girlfriend to stay in the closet as long as they were enjoying housing support,

Her mother was really supportive. I stayed in her house [...] I stayed until I found a house [...] I stayed around a month [...] her mother knew but I shouldn't know that she knows.

The disapproving mother supported not only her daughter but also her girlfriend as long as they did not openly express their intimate relationship in the house.

This restrictions can affect the personal lives of LGB+ even inside their homes. Alex (gay, 27, closeted) stresses that,

[...] For example, I could meet a guy, and he would tell me, e.g. 'I live with my parents'. [...] Then, because, obviously, we live in this era and this country, I cannot go at his home and watch a movie while hugging, and this is an important issue for the progress of a relationship.

In connection with Alex's quote, it is important to keep in mind that in Greece, many adults still live with their parents. Give that same-sex partners are generally not accepted, LGB+ couples cannot enjoy quality time at their partners' places. Alex continued about his personal experience:

This situation occurred with my ex. [...] He stayed in his paternal house, [...] but because his parents were there, it was a burden for the whole relationship. [...] In the beginning, I was thinking that it did not bother me, and nothing bad happened, but as time went on, you want to see the other person's place a bit, because I think that is how you get to know a person.

Alex's worry is echoing the one of Nicoleta (28, closeted) that she lives inside the family building, in a granted and financial supported house,

They [the parents] never restricted me in bringing someone or anything... but certainly if I lived by myself in another house, even if I was in the house across the street, I know it would be easier [...] for example, before I disclosed to my parents she [her girlfriend] could leave from the house and I knew that someone could [...] see her. You see...something like this...Or they can ring the bell and because it would be weird [for her] to be always around she would stay in the room [...] Ideally, I would like to live in another house, to be by myself, to be autonomous and to be possible for everyone to come.

However, because of financial difficulties she cannot sustain a house without the family support, thus she has to bear the limitation that her housing situation is coupled with.

In the same vein, Aris (30, closeted), who is enjoying a semi-dependent house (without kitchen) granted to him upstairs of his parents, commented on his housing situation as follows,

I will find a guy that I like, he will like me and he will tell me, 'Let's go to your place', and I am going to tell him, 'You know... I cannot'. I do not want the house to be an

obstacle. [...] [A guy] to stay, [...] it cannot be done. No way! [...] It is restricting me, obviously. I could never even think of bringing a person there, and because there were times when I wanted to be able to bring a person there, and because I am basically thinking of it as a possibility for the future that I would like to find someone and be able to bring him there. I am also thinking that if I find a guy, it will be a big obstacle that I cannot bring him there.

All in all, logically and according to the research partners 'You need the house certainly to have a social and erotic life' (Olga, 42, closeted), and this can be even more crucial for a social group who cannot express themselves freely everywhere outdoors in Greece.

Moreover, families' imagery for heteronormativity can complicate the housing decisions of young people. As Alexandra (bisexual, 29, closeted) explained during the interview, she was going to announce to her mother that she was leaving the maternal house to cohabit with a girl, a friend, but she was hesitating,

What I am afraid of is that when I tell her that I am moving in with X (her friend) now, she is going to bring about this subject—'Is there something going on with X? Why do you want to move in with X? Why don't you find a man to move in with?'[...] I am really afraid of that talk. [...] [The mother will come to the house] in order not to make her suspicious, I will tell her that one of us will sleep in the living room and the other one in the room.

Later, she confessed that she would not have to be so afraid and cautious of this discussion had she been straight. Her transition to an autonomous living is impacted indirectly from this worry not to frustrate her mother.

Last but not least, a house is usually regarded as a home when it is appropriated by a family (and not only). However, LGB+ people cannot always share these family moments with their families in full disclosure. To make this limitation more understandable, Alex (gay, 27, closeted) expressed his worry and sorrow as follows:

Sexuality does not necessarily define you as a person, but it is sad that people you love so much do not know you the way you would really want. That 'this is my partner and not just a friend'. [...] This is something that I have always had in mind—the issue of my parents [that they do not know], and it will always worry me. [...] It is a pity, especially now that I am going abroad. You never know what life will bring. [...] My parents will never know who I really am.

To be excluded from family life when the person needs this engagement the most is a significant drawback. The right to participate full disclosure in family life, can be reassuring and healing for people who face discrimination in other domains in life. However, the "full membership" has certain rules that cannot/should not be accepted by everyone.

#### *Geographical limitation*

Another indirect impact of the LGB+ identity is evident in the 'geographical limitation' on the freedom to express oneself. In particular, the countryside can suppress the freedom of

LGB+ people, thereby representing a closeted place, whereas cities are regarded as places of 'outness' (Di Feliciano & Gadelha, 2016).

A person originating from a small city can feel obliged to suppress himself/herself there. Pavlos (38, closeted) revealed this issue concerning his hometown, which is a small town commonly used as a vacation place:

It is something that I do not prefer. I go mostly for family holidays—Christmas, Easter—and some days during summer, and in general, I can say that I avoid it a bit even though I have loving friends there. [...] It is something that I do not find relaxing and relieving, and I do not imagine myself living here for a long period, at least now, when I am young and want to 'live' a bit.

The countryside is not, at least presently, an adequate place where LGB+ people can enjoy their personal lives when there are family connections with these places. Most participants were at pains to emphasise that they could use their parents' hometowns – smaller cities/towns than Athens - indeed as vacation destinations, but they have to conceal the identities of their partners if they wish to bring them there as well or not to bring them at all:

I would bring him [the partner] comfortably, but I wouldn't say to dad, 'Dad, I am going with my boyfriend to X [the village]'. The same way I am going with my friends, I would also go with my boyfriend. (Aris, 30, closeted)

With the partner, I haven't used it yet, not because I don't want to. With a girl, I would not be able to use it, except if I introduced her as a friend. [...] There are neighbours around. [...] I wouldn't be free to do stuff if I went with my girlfriend. (Alexandra, 29, closeted)

It wouldn't be possible for me to go, obviously not with my partner, no way. It is impossible. (Panos, 29, open)

All in all, concerning the geographic attribute and limitation, these stories justify the 'quest for identity', as suggested by Knopp (2004), as the participants tend to avoid living in smaller cities regardless of whether they are originated from the countryside or Athens. However, there are also indirect manifestations of this marginalisation from the countryside. An example of 'queering the provincial context' (Di Feliciano & Gadelha, 2016, 1) is an online video of one of the research partners performing his drag persona appropriating his empty parental house in a small conservative countryside town. During the show, he narrates stories from closeted LGB+ locals without disclosing their identities but stressing the hypocrisy of the strict and narrow-minded local community.

In most of the cases presented in the empirical analysis section, people found ways to conceal or to negotiate their rights to their personal lives without losing their families' support but suffering the indirect impacts. The main strategy is not to reveal their and their partners' sexual identity while they introduce them as friends. In that way, they can enjoy a housing solution provided by a conservative family without engaging in conflicts, drama

or emotional extortion. However, this tactic still limits their freedom of expression even inside their homes as they have to be careful and secretive.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The absence of state provision for housing, the scarcity and precariousness of employment opportunities and the increase in direct and indirect taxes caused by the austerity measures in Greece render the provision of housing mainly a family commitment, as people are unable to ensure housing arrangements by themselves. The family is highlighted as the main source of relief for its members during this socio-economic turbulence (Naldini & Jurado, 2013; Moreno & Mari-Klose, 2013; Martin, 2015). Those who succeeded in their housing strategies during previous, more affluent periods are now able to support their children to a certain extent. For the rest, there are no alternatives but to struggle and accept precarious, unwanted housing solutions, given the uneven stratification of access to homeownership across generations (Forrest & Yip, 2012).

Through the support that Greek families strive to offer, they can strengthen also their control over the beneficiaries as family support creates or extends an intergenerational contract associated with obligations. Indicatively, people who accept support from their families are usually accountable to them when making personal life decisions. This research, albeit restricted in time, place and sample, demonstrates that the LGB+ community still carries a social stigma. Thus, for these people to enjoy a housing solution, they may have to conceal parts of their real identity, given that the home is still an heteronormative structure where rules are imposed that suppress the freedom of non-conventional subjectivities.

If housing provision is considered as a gift, then it could be argued that gift-giving serves as a generator of identity that the giver retains for the receiver (Schwartz, 1967); the receiver accepts, together with the gift/housing support, a definition for himself/herself. Therefore, certain expectations for the use of the house are imposed, and as the house is connected with family and personal life, these expectations will expand also on the life trajectory and decisions of the receiver.

The research partners and other social groups in Greece are trapped in this inter-generational support reciprocity that involves housing solutions and personal life decisions. One person who is given a house has to guide his/her life into the direction he/she is expected to, that is, a heteronormative, family/kinship-centric life with conventional milestones, such as marriage and childbirth, and lifelong devotion to the kinship's obligations. In case the personal life is disapproved, the receiver of the support could either neglect it (and thus also neglect the identity that was attributed to him/her) or hide or conceal his/her identity in order to continue benefiting from the support.

The latter option where the people are 'play(ing) with their identities to gain normative heterosexual privileges' (Rodó-de-Zárate 2013, 8) was more widespread among the participants in this study. In a way, with this strategy, they succeeded in "queering the family home" but with the cost of hiding parts of or their whole personal lives, which comes in the form of damages they may suffer in their emotional and psychological well-being or, at least, lost intimate personal and family moments that every person has the absolute right

to experience. Therefore, it can be argued that the Greek household is dynamically an 'unconscious queer shelter and site of blind-eye treatment' instead of the powerful image of a 'site of resistance to heterosexism and support for the ongoing development of gay, lesbian, bisexual identities' (Gorman–Murray 2008a, 32) that is celebrated in other cultural contexts.

LGB+ people cannot and should not always rely on Greek family welfare for housing, such as any other person should not. Therefore, scholars on the field need to realise further place-sensitive research to produce a better understanding of the complex ways by which sexuality and gender performativity, among others, define housing pathways and related difficulties. Moreover, the research partners' stories suggest 'a set of qualitative examples which can be adopted and used in public rhetoric' (Gorman–Murray 2015, 423) in order to compel policymakers to urgently establish anti-discrimination policies, LGB+ sensitivity training for the public sector and rights recognition towards housing, and to regard every citizen as an extreme case for housing provision fortressing his/her emotional wellness. Moreover, there is a need for empowerment of related social movements and radical political activity with regard to LGBTQ+ rights in order for the acknowledgment of the specific difficulties of non-heteronormative individuals. Specifically, during this period of socio-economic turbulence and rise of conservatism, it is crucial to remain informed and activated against any kind of discrimination. All in all, social awareness, activism and critical scholarship should progress together to generate a social impact on sexual and gender equality and freedom of expression.

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## PAPER 3

### **‘Shpi<sup>19</sup>’ and ‘Spiti<sup>20</sup>’. Transnational housing pathways of emigrant Albanian families in Greece. Migration, housing and culture.**

#### ABSTRACT

The first Albanian migrants arrive in Greece in the 1990s taking residence in large and medium size urban centers as well as the countryside and they constitute the largest ethnic minority in Greece up to now. These emigrants worked hard to acquire the financial means to provide for their families while homeownership seemed to be one of the main goals for them, including investments both in Albania and Greece. Simultaneously, Albanians preserved their culture and ethics strong even abroad. Family and house are two interconnected concepts that affect their everyday life and decisions. In this paper, the Albanian family housing strategies and housing practices are explored in connection with family and kin culture as well as their migration pathway. Moreover, as these people, even though incorporated (this obviously differs in each case) in the host society, still maintain links mental, cultural but also material with their country of origin, their transnational housing strategies are investigated in both the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ country.

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<sup>19</sup> Home in Albanian

<sup>20</sup> Home in Greek



## INTRODUCTION

“When the school director is leaving [migrating to Greece], would I [want] to go to school?”, Fontas (42). Our research partner above is demonstrating with sarcasm the tension of the migration phenomenon in 1995. Back then he was a teenager and his father couldn’t forbid him of quitting school to migrate as even the school directors were abandoning their positions to go to Greece. Indeed, the characteristics of Albanian emigration resembles more a mass exodus following a war than a movement for labour (Nikas&King, 2005).

The first generation of Albanians who emigrated to Greece through the years adopted parallel housing strategies in both countries. Since the first years of migration migrants saved money in order to improve their housing conditions in the old country (Labrianidis, & Kazazi, 2006; Iosifides et al., 2007; Gemi, 2016) while later on many of them tended to invest in housing in the host country (Vomvyla, 2013a) even without acquiring a long-term resident permit (see for the legal status Gemi, 2016). These strategies, of first generation Albanian migrants, more or less determined the housing practices of their children as well. The housing investments created a transnational social space strengthening the links between the two countries by validating the legitimate physical and psychological membership to both countries (Gemi, 2014).

These Albanian transnational housing strategies in both countries are an understudied issue. The existing research focuses on investment in housing and return migration (Dalakoglou, 2010b; Loizou, Michailidis & Karasavoglou, 2014; Gemi, 2016), Albanians’ geographical distribution in Athens in relation to socio-spatial segregation (Sayas, 2006; Maloutas et al., 2012) while some researchers focus on the transnational identity caused by migration (Vomvyla, 2013a; 2013b, Gemi, 2014). The following research seeks to gain specific insight into the transnational housing practices of families migrating from Albania and residing in Athens in connection to some of their cultural characteristics. It attempts this by focusing on the ‘Albanian generation 1.5’, i.e. migrants born in Albania.

The paper is structured as follows: first a theoretical framing of Albanian family<sup>21</sup> and housing culture as well as migration patterns is presented. The second theoretical section elaborates on the concept of transnational housing strategies. After clarifying the above concepts, a description of the methodology, the characteristics of the field and the research partners is analysed. Section three draws on empirical data and is divided into two parts. The first offers information about Albanian’s housing practices in connection to nuclear and extended family attributes like gender power roles and housing trajectories, inheritance and hosting customs. The second part is informed exclusively by the transnational housing

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<sup>21</sup> Here we regard as family the conventional form of it which usually includes the heterosexual parents, their children and concerning the cultural attributes of the specific group also the grandparents and in some cases even other relatives with whom members maintain emotional attachments, personal relationships and they are influenced by them.

strategies of Albanian families, the investments in the old and the new country as well as the process of return. Drawing on the empirical findings, the 'migration and housing pathway patterns' of emigrants is presented in the second part. The paper concludes with further reflections on the transnational housing strategies of the emigrants and the role of the family in housing practices of the younger generation.

## ALBANIAN FAMILY, HOUSING AND MIGRATION

Greece and Albania, because of their proximity, contacts and shared history exhibit some similar cultural characteristics (Hart, 1999; Papadopoulos et al., 2015). In particular concerning housing attributes, informality and “spontaneous” housing practices rely heavily on self-promoted housing solutions and the assistance from the extended family (for Greece see: Mantouvalou&Mauridou, 1993; Maloutas, 2003, Leontidou, 1994) and urbanization processes based on the strength of promises guaranteed by the personal honor especially of men, are encountered in different periods in both countries (for Greece: Clogg, 1983; for Albania: Dalakoglou, 2010b). Moreover, they demonstrate similar emigration characteristics and related remittance’s activity (Nikas&King, 2005). Thus, the concept of family and kinship culture and other Albanian economic and political events that define their housing culture will be examined in this section.

Albanian culture, customs, values and ethics are strongly affected by the ‘Kanun’; a set of self-adjusting rules that was followed for centuries in the northern regions of Albania and it dictated -still impacts some- societal norms. One version of it had been codified already since 15<sup>th</sup> century, characterizing Albanian customs, ideals and the customary law (Young, 2000) while it regulated all the aspects of family life. Family, patriarchy, honour and ‘the sacred guest’ are the most significant features highlighted by Kanun that impact housing practices. Correspondingly, Albanian emigrant housing practices should be analysed by focusing on the dimension of family and kin dynamics as these networks constitute the main support system and the main motivation for the migration process (Gemi, 2014).

The extended family is considered here as a type of kin group that retains certain bonds and micro-solidarities between members of different familial groups (Harris, 1970). Kinship in the researched social group strongly influences the housing pathway of families and individuals. Their ethnic and socio-cultural background bring the kinship ethos in the core of many important decisions and practices. These networks constitute a kind of social capital<sup>22</sup> (Labrianidis, & Kazazi, 2006) that assists the maintenance of ethnic identity and feeling of belonging (Reynolds, 2015) based on social norms and network functions even when the members are abroad (Vomvyla, 2013). ‘Life is easier in a community blessed with a substantial stock of social capital’ (Putnam, 1995, 66). More specifically, kinship plays a major role as it provides its members support for housing by hosting or offering housing solutions but also through the “pioneer” household in the host country that “invites” kinship members to settle in the same area. Indeed, the kinship is part of the social capital that can be preserved by a community through proximity and thus impacts the choice of settlement patterns of the newly arrived immigrants (Arapoglou&Sayas, 2009) but also contextualises their future pathway.

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<sup>22</sup> According to Putnam (2000) social capital refers networks, norms, and social trust that can promote mutual benefit through coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit”.

In practice, every family in Albania has at least one of its members working abroad (Labrianidis, & Kazazi, 2006) that could facilitate the remaining members to move and reside in the host country. Therefore, family, networks and the support they provide are present in the migration stories of the emigrants through the flow of people, material, hosting processes, information networks, images (Iosifides et al., 2007; Labrianidis, & Kazazi, 2006). This flow of information assisted also the members that were left behind to arrive in Greece for family reunification (Vomvyla, 2013b).

Hospitality as one of the supreme moral value is mentioned also in 38 articles in the Kanun and impacts the migration and housing practices (Sadiku, 2014). Simultaneously, honour is much at stake concerning hospitality and should be offered indefinitely to any guest (Young, 2000). 'The house of the Albanian belongs to God and the guest'. (Dukagjini, Gjeçov & Fox (1989), Article 602, p. 132.).

Moreover, an incident in Albanian history that impacted and is still impacting indirectly on housing strategies concerns the uprising of 1997. In 1997 the pyramid-saving schemes where Albanians rushed to invest money, even from the liquidation of recently-acquired properties, (Dalakoglou, 2010a) burst. People put in these schemes up to 6 years of wages/salaries in order to receive the irrational profit of a 40% monthly return on investment (Carletto et al., 2006). Nevertheless, after the collapse of the scheme, 2 billion dollars of investments – over half of 2016 nation's GDP- vanished (Carletto et al., 2006; Dalakoglou, 2010a). Almost half of the population was left bankrupt and thus despair rose (Vomvyla, 2013). The uprising that followed the scandal was intense and some people turned to illegality by stealing guns and were committing criminal acts including entering and robbing empty houses (Dalakoglou, 2010a).

This incident produced lack of confidence of Albanians towards banks and bank-like systems that were related to housing strategies. Generally, banks in Albania are not significantly involved in housing (Balla et al., 2007). Simultaneously, loans from Greek banks for people born in Albania are not always possible as a result of their precarious legal status deriving from the problematic Greek policy areas such as residence status and citizenship (Gemi, 2016). At the same time, because of the collapse of the pyramid pseudo-banks in 1997, Albanians do not trust banks and prefer unofficial/informal sources of money or wealth transfer only physically through kinship networks (Dalakoglou, 2010b; Nikas & King, 2005). Therefore, in order to achieve home-ownership they rely on their own financial possibilities or borrow money from family and kinship networks.

## **MIGRATION PATTERNS**

The decision for Albanians to migrate is male-pioneered and thus the first wave consisted mainly of male movement (1990-5) (Iosofides et al., 2007). Usually, men emigrated first (Vullnetari&King, 2016) so they arrived first in Greece around the early 1990s and met other relatives or compatriots to be supported through solidarity and communal practices.

In this way, the newcomers resided in overcrowded households in order to spend as less money as possible for accommodation until they go back or be able to bring the family here.

In some cases, also, both of the parents travel to the destination country first and the children or the youngest child/children stay behind with grandparents or other relatives until the parents are able to bring them also to Greece. There are even cases where the mother with the children or just the children had to return for a while back to Albania until the parents or the father in particular would be able to secure a job and a housing solution. The last two cases are described as 'chain migration' (Vullnetari, 2007).

In a lot of our cases, the pioneers of the emigrant families before settling down to Athens passed by other countryside cities, smaller or bigger, where they found work opportunities and where they resided temporarily. Furthermore, both when the father or the parents just arrived in Greece but even in some cases when the whole family reunifies or settles in Greece their first housing practice (first accommodation) usually involves 'hosting' - one of the most important cultural values of Albanians.

The typical pathway of these emigrants in Greece, after initially living in overcrowded accommodation is to try to move to more spacious and/or better residences. Family reunification happens usually when the pioneer finds an adequate housing solution usually hosted by other emigrants or sharing an accommodation with other Albanian families also newcomers. As the years pass by and the economic situation of the family is strengthened their housing situation is improving gradually with the first step to be the housing independence of the family unit. In many cases we encounter vertical upward movement in the condominiums as the migrants are settling down (Vaiou, 2010; see also Balabanidis & Bourlessas, 2018). Simultaneously, parents want to provide for their children a meliorated environment (Pratsinakis, 2005) and this is also appreciated by children as they stressed in their interviews.

Nevertheless, the most "secure" housing situation in both their culture and the host country's culture is considered the homeownership as is proved by their transnational housing strategies. Simultaneously, this can be appointed also to the fact that, historically, the regime provided with a shelter all citizens either by offering them apartments or houses or the construction materials that were used to build their own houses as it was revealed by the life narratives of our research partners. Indeed, some emigrants were able to accumulate a small capital (Vomvyla, 2013b) that could assist the achievement of melioration of their housing situation and even homeownership.

Throughout the stories of our participants we discovered that the housing pathway of emigrants is not geographically linear: Their housing strategies are developing simultaneously in both countries by investing into the local or the old country's properties (see also Dalakolgou, 2010b).

## TRANSNATIONALISM IN HOUSING STRATEGIES

This study draws also on the concept of transnationalism as it is well suited for Albanian emigrants who tend to spend their lives between two countries, feeling attached to both in different, complementary ways, thus constructing a transnational identity. Transnationalism, is regarded as an umbrella-concept that involves the the “experience of building lives between more than two worlds” (Vomvula, 2012, 2) including both the ‘physical and cultural world’. Simultaneously, transport and communication development facilitates transnationalism as it eases cross-border ties of the kinship members. Concerning Albanian emigrant this tendency evident in particular through transnational family housing practices and strategies in both the old and the new country. Also, in the case of Albania and Greece, cultural and geographical proximity are factors that sustain the transnational practices as well as the socio-economic context of both countries.

As a result of the Albanian transnational networks, familial, social, cultural, economic and political relationships are reshaping (Gemi, 2014). Multiple ties and interactions are linking people and realities, resulting in migrants adopting new identities (Al-Ali & Koser, 2002). At the same time, the process of building or renovating houses back home, even without a clear intention of residing back there, is ‘a way of making sense of this transnational and transitional world’ by building ‘in a transitional and transnational migratory cosmos’ as Dalakoglou is demonstrating (2010b, 772). Moreover, these houses in the ‘old country’ are significant for the re-establishment of their social and kinship ties in Albania by breaking the barrier of distance and creating a relative proximity to people, space and culture. These houses ‘are actually “flowing” gradually into Albania from Greece’ (ibid., 772). This sense of continuity is a result of the family strategies that are aiming towards a strong interconnection between the old and the new, geographically, culturally and materially.

People who are involved in these transnational practices might be facing a sense of fragmentation between the two countries causing them confusion and even pain (Al-Ali & Koser, 2002). Their houses back in Albania can be empty or uninhabited, preserving their lives’ memories. In either case, the protagonist in the local community is the man emigrant who succeeded in building a house that proves his - usually in this patriarchal society – success abroad and devotion to Albania (Dalakoglou, 2010b). Usually, if the house is constructed and not bought, it is located in the hometown of the emigrant and in proximity to relatives (ibid.).

Moreover, the legal, social, political and economic context of both home and host country should be taken into consideration when discussing the transnational practices (Al-Ali & Koser, 2002; Loizou, Michailidis & Karasavoglou, 2014). Transnationalism deepens as long as integration is less possible (Faist, 2010) as the migrants have to maintain ties, links, networks with the old or perspective countries in order to ensure a future that it is not certain in the reception country.

Namely, Albanians in Greece, are experiencing a partial integration due to laws that are mainly reactive and do not facilitate the integration in some sectors like citizenship and

political participation and the fact that they are entitled mainly to temporal legal status (Gemi, 2014; 2016). Also, people coming from Albania are facing xenophobic and intolerant public opinion (Lazaridis & Psimmenos, 2000; Loizou, Michailidis & Karasavvoglou, 2014). Indeed, just in 1991 did the first legislative framework established in Greece in order to control and manage migration (Loizou, Michailidis & Karasavvoglou, 2014) while the very term of 'integration' was introduced into Greek legislation just in 2001 (Gemi, 2014). However, even though their legally integration is reported low, their everyday life practices show fortunately the opposite at least before the crisis (Kokosalakis, & Fokas, 2007).

Nowadays, as the global financial crisis struck Greece since 2008, Albanian emigrants are not able to accumulate the required social security stamps to maintain their legal status for them and their families; as most of the low-wage heavy job sectors where they are/were occupied, like construction sector, are facing rise in unemployment (Gedeshi & De Zwager, 2012). Simultaneously, the Greek state does not employ drastic measures to secure their legal status (Gemi, 2016). The average annual savings of Albanian families in Greece has decreased causing them to face insecurity, as they are not protected and supported by the welfare state (Gemi, 2014). Unfortunately, especially the older emigrants are facing a financial and legal precarity that motivates them to invest in the country of origin or has delayed them from investing in the host country. Here this tendency is investigating through the stories of the research partners.

## **THE STUDY: METHODOLOGICAL AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK**

Firstly, this research utilises a multi-dimensional approach with the postmodern analytical framework of housing pathways as a core. In-depth analysis of the specific social and ethnic groups and their transnational housing practices vis a vis family relationships was conducted. The housing pathway approach assisted significantly in order to explore, demonstrate and analyse the housing career of the individual (Clapham, 2005) as part of/as a household and its interactions (pathways of individual households) (Clapham, 2002). The dynamic nature of pathways and their significance overtime is essential for this research that seeks to identify the changes in housing practices through the years and the process of migrants' integration as well as the impact of the recent humanitarian and economic crisis in Greece. Furthermore, the literature that this research is based on focuses on the cultural geography of home, geographies of family and migration studies.

The main method/technique comprises of in-depth, face to face, recorded interviews based on an adaptation of biographical interviewing, focusing on the respondents and their family's housing pathway through a loose format of family life narrative. Simultaneously, the migration pathway of the participants' family and the personal one was explored in order to create a double path concerning transnational movements and housing practices sequence. All interviews were personal, in Greek.

Concerning the selection of the interviewees, personal networks assisted to gain access and trust to young people who were born in Albania and migrated at an early age in Greece. By interviewing this generation information was gathered about their housing practices but also the housing strategies that the first generation of migrants, their parents, employed. Moreover, coding was realized by identifying from the data the main points that the research partners focus on during their narrations in order to emphasize them correspondingly at the analysis stage. In the following parts of the paper the adjective 'Albanian' is used but this term is used explicitly referring to the social and cultural capital and not for the ethnic determination characteristic of the research partners as they may "legally" be or feel Greek.

It is argued that a truly ethical research is not possible because of power imbalances in the field and by keeping this in mind the researchers self-reflected constantly to evaluate the effect of their presence in the field. Moreover, some basic precautions were employed such as changing any identifying information that was provided such as names and places for the sake of anonymity and confidentiality. Therefore, pseudonyms are used and concerning geographical attributes, there is reference only to the size of the place e.g. town, village, urban centre except for Athens that is the field of this research.

The analysis in this work is located within a social context of family, housing and culture and was based on data generated by young people's (aged 25-35) family transnational

housing pathways who were born in Albania and migrated to Greece. This group is considered as the “generation 1.5” and is distinguished from the first generation of adult migrants that came to Greece. There are 15 participants in this research, 7 self-characterized themselves as Albanians and 8 as Greeks originating from areas within modern Albania, a.k.a. Northern Epirotes<sup>23</sup> (Voreiopeirotos in Greek). They were migrated to Greece at the age of 1 up to 16 years old, and they originate from a variety of different Albanian cities, towns and villages. In the table below some of the characteristics of the interviewees are demonstrated.

	Albanians	Voreiopeirotos	Total
Sample	8	7	15
New or renovated house in Albania	6	5	11
Homeownership in Greece	4	5	9
Not owning a house in Greece	4	2	6
Average years of Homeownership in Greece	13	15,25	14,1
Arrived before 1997	6	7	13
Arrived after 1997	2	0	2
Living with parents	0	3	3
Living with a partner	2	2	4
Living alone/cohabitating with siblings or non-relatives	5	3	8

TABLE 1: Research partners’ transnational housing practices

The Albanian young people are living outside the parental house while 2 of them are cohabitating with a partner and the other 5 with siblings or non-relatives. On the other hand, 3 of the Voreiopeirotos still live with their parents and another three with siblings and non-relatives while the remaining 2 with a partner. The common part of the 2 groups’ pathway is, except for the starting point of Albania, various different stops in the along the way, and the current residence, Athens, for all of them, where they have been residing for more than 10 years.

The main reason that the two sub-groups are examined together in this work is their common migratory history: they were all born in Albania, their families or migrated initially illegally during the same period and faced similar xenophobic attitudes from the host society and obstacles from the authorities. However, in some aspects, Voreiopeirotos with Greek identity and the knowledge of Greek language were treated a bit differently but still not as returning expatriates. Voreiopeirotos come from a region with historical complexity close to the borders with Greece. However, when they migrate to Greece they consider

<sup>23</sup> This ethnic group is recognized officially from the Albanian state as Greek National Minority of Albania. ("Ελληνική Δημοκρατία - Υπουργείο Εξωτερικών". Mfa.gr.)

Albania as their old country, maintaining links there by investing in new houses or renovating their properties there as our respondents are narrating. Therefore, the hypothesis that there exist common social and cultural capital concerning the housing practices and strategies is considered. These commonalities originate from the common starting point that impacts their housing culture. However, these are to be examined through the research material by investigating their housing strategies and practices in connection with the local housing market and other parameters.

# HOUSING STRATEGIES THROUGH NUCLEAR AND EXTENDED FAMILY

## NUCLEAR FAMILY AND KINSHIP

Whatever father said, it was a law. No... the grandfather was in charge. [...] grandfather was the pillar of the house, the leader. He had 10 children... He was 70 years old... he was burned out. Grandfather! Whatever grandpa said was done in the house e.g. law. So, they had grandpa like a leader and he then decided that, 'you know what', when the children were sharing: 'Are you getting married, find a house.' The woman elsewhere, elsewhere. The little one stayed at home, he was obliged as the young son, not the daughters. Daughters were given away. *Fontas, (42)*

In the lines of the respondent above, the structure of Albanian family and society is described in the most explicit way: Albania is ruled, by a patriarchal and patrilocal culture that is impacted by the 'Kanun'. This assignment of rules and norms structured gender imbalances by the imposition of patriarchy, the clearly defined gender roles in the family and even the inability of the woman to inherit family property (Nixon, 2009, see also Young, 2000). This housing culture creates obligations and power relations that can lead to control from the family over its supported members.

Albanian society was customary male-dominated, indicating that man belongs outside and woman inside the family home and her only destiny is a heteronormative linear life trajectory to marriage and children bearing (Young, 2000; Vomvyla, 2013b; 2013; Sadiku, 2014). Specifically, the large Albanian extended family acted as the stronghold of patriarchy (Vullnetari&King, 2016). Real estate was owned by the men of the family who were considered the heads of the family whereas women had power in the domestic sphere and were considered part of their husband's kinship group (Dalakoglou, 2010b).

This code of conduct affects furthermore the housing pathways of the people in a patrilinear manner according to gender and the hierarchy inside the family. Marriage, a milestone of the life trajectory, impacts on the housing situation of a person for all genders; namely, man is supposed to accommodate his family inside the parental house or outside if he is not the last one living at home. Also, only after marriage the son has the option to separate his finances from that of the household's which until then are managed solely by the patriarch. Meanwhile, the woman is following the housing pathway that is defined by her husband and she is 'obeying' and taking care of him but also of his parents if they stay inside the parental home (Vomvyla, 2013b; Vullnetari&King, 2016).

In the Albanian culture – something that was also adopted by the Voreioipeirotas who are affected by the local cultural rules- the woman is moving to the residence that her husband managed to acquire for his family. Specifically, the options for a 'bride' is of moving to her

husband's family house with at least his parents, but in some cases also his brothers and their families, or to a new accommodation only for his family. This is also demonstrated by the narrations of our respondents:

He [his father] had to stay with his family, therefore when she got married, my mother accepted this regime. This was the case back then, for the brides to stay with the mothers in law [...] and we grew up with the grandparents. [...] We were all in one house and not just the main ones [the immediate family members]. *Fatime, (32)*

## INHERITANCE

A cultural attribute that differs significantly from the modern Greek one is that the male children (sons) are cater for the needs of their parents – which includes obviously the wives of the sons (Vullnetari&King, 2016). Moreover, it is the youngest son ('the son of old age' (Vomvyla, 2013b, 11; Vomvyla, 2013a, 195), who is supposed to be the last to form a family of his own, that is entitled to inherit the parental house. However, this gift come with strings attached as he has take care of the parents almost exclusively. This is characterized as a 'patrilineal kinship structure' with 'patrilocal residence patterns' (Dalakoglou, 2010b, 775; Vullnetari&King, 2016). In this way, the adult male children secure the wellbeing of the "sacred" parents with respect to health care and housing issues (Vomvyla, 2013a). Thus, parents are motivated for having a large family with many offsprings, in order to safeguard care (Vullnetari&King, 2016). Erion (31) sums up such a housing pathway of the 'son of old age':

Always, someone had to stay with the grandparents. Always. Which means that the one who would take care of the grandparents would be somehow the one who will inherit the house of the grandparents but he will take care of them accordingly.

But, he continues:

I know for sure a lot of families [that migrated] that have abandoned grandparents [...] This [matter of care] is mainly for the financial part rather than that someone is 'trapped'. Actually, the one who is relied upon to somehow send them money, to go to a doctor and essentially, he is the one, after they die e.t.c, who inherits basically what grandparents have like land, like house, anything.

It seems from Erion's narration that migration affected this patrilocal household management. The reason is that as the children and even the youngest son migrated to be Greece or elsewhere are not anymore in Albania close to his parents. Therefore, the care of the elderly which was provided by the male descedants was challenged by a 'care drain' (Vullnetari&King, 2016). Despite the fact that within transnational families the care duties are renegotiated in most cases, it is still considered the duty of the youngest son, even if he is abroad, to support his parents financially but also in many other respects to ensure their wellbeing.

Moreover, even in these cases the public imaginary and mainly the rest of the relatives demand from the responsible son and his family to fulfill their ancestral obligation. This custom also came up in a group interview with two male Voreioipiotes. They were narrating a story where the grandmother of one of the two, still residing in Albania, was financially supported by the family of the youngest son. However, even if they were financing her care they were accused by other relatives for 'not being there for her'. Later, when the grandmother migrated to Athens, she agreed to stay only in the house of the youngest son and would not consider staying in any of her other children's houses, as she was feeling she would be a burden. These cultural characteristics of Albanians endure even after migration and have a crucial impact housing practices such as the sacredness of hosting.

## HOUSE OF THE GUEST

In particular, it was common for the newly arriving emigrants either individuals or families to be hosted by family or kinship households. Specifically, kinship networks assisted in hosting newly arriving members in Greece until they were able to achieve an autonomous housing solution (Iosifides et al., 2007). The period of hosting is an important one and was experienced by all of the research partners either as being hosted and/or as hosts. Nora (34) whose family was one of the pioneer ones of her clan demonstrates her family's hosting practices as such:

[In their first house] he had another bedroom where all of the migrants that passed by Greece have stayed there (laughing). Relatives, friends, cousins etc. There! All of them. [...] Essentially, I grew up with a lot of people. Namely, we were never the family, the nuclear family. Eh, this could happen some days per year, to stay alone. Basically, we had guests all the time who were what I told you before, relatives, friends, people that were coming to work for some time or coming to [...] stay permanently [...] But we were always, let's say typically, 8 people [in the house]. We have reached also 15 [people]. Many times, there was also a second family together e.g. my mother's sister with her husband and her 2 children.

It has to be stressed here, that this hosting custom is practically assisted almost solely by the woman/en of the house. Some of the participants refer to the effort that their mother put in hosting relatives for up to 2 years as the only caretaker. Also, this effort is put on hosting especially the relatives of her husband as her direct relatives would be hosted by another household according to patrilocal culture.

Hosting culture concerns also housing practices back in the home country. For instance, another category indicative of the Albanian history relates to the uninhabited houses back home and especially during the uprising of 1997 (Dalakoglou, 2010a). After the breakdown of the pyramid schemes and the uprising, armed people entered the empty houses and stole everything, even construction material (Dalakoglou, 2010b). In order therefore to avoid the

*'pliatsiko'* (a Greek word that comes from the Albanian word *'plackë'* that refers to grabbing of wealth and valuable items in time of war or in other extreme situations looting) they granted temporarily the houses to relatives to live in and protect them. Drita (34) demonstrates this strategy as such:

Those years were dangerous let's say and they preferred, in order for the house not to remain empty, to have a familiar person go there instead of an unknown person that he could enter the house and claim that it is his [...] They have granted us their house for free in order to protect it not for someone else to enter and say that it is his.

At a similar pattern, another hosting practice involved people left behind, especially the elderly, who migrated to Greece much later in order to be close to their relatives that had already settled down and were hosted by relatives' households (Vullnetari&King, 2016). This hosting practice was linked also in some cases with the rebellion of 1997 in Albania and the preoccupation for the safety of the relatives that remained back there while the rest were already in Greece.

## TRANSNATIONAL HOUSING STRATEGIES

My father invested in Albania for some reason [...] We had a house, we had the ground floor and someone else was living upstairs. [...] then my father said to the guy upstairs in order to acquire the whole 2-story house, he told him 'Do you sell it?' 'I do' the other guy responded. 'I am buying it'. And he bought it! But...he didn't think why to buy it there and not to buy it here? [...] no one is going to return there. [...] And I am telling him 'why did you buy it there?'. He responds 'To return, but on the other hand', he says, 'I will also be a stranger there, if I go after so many years'. *Vasilis (27)*

This quote above brings about the issues that are going to be discussed in this section: the family housing strategies and investments in both the old and the new country as well as the perspective of the return and its "housing mark".

### *SHPI*

Contemporary 'Albanian space' is affected on many levels by welcoming international interference in the Albanian governance and by planning decisions, that are aiming to render it more competitive in the 'globalised' capitalist system (Triantis&Vatavali, 2016). It is also affected by emigrants' imported housing practices and the related strategies. These are supported financially by remittances from Greece and are facilitated by family and kinship processes that prevail in Albanian culture.

Thus, housing production, the main sector of construction in Albania, has been growing rapidly since 1990s without however rendering new housing more affordable for the lower social strata (Balla et al., 2007). Remittances from Greece are invested mainly in housing,

especially after the collapse of the pyramid system in 1997 as people preferred to invest their savings in a non-bank depended investment (Balla et al., 2007; Nikas&King, 2005).

Concurrently, Albania has one of the highest migratory rates rendering migration an important feature of the Albanian economy as a whole. The remittances represent the one-fifth of country's GDP<sup>24</sup> keeping Albania dependent on the Greek economy (Dalakolgu, 2010a; Labrianidis, & Kazazi, 2006; Gemi, 2016). For the first emigrants from Albania, migration was considered as temporary state and in some cases a circular process (Gemi, 2014; Labrianidis, & Kazazi, 2006). Their housing strategies through remittances' investments, back in Albania, verify this observation (Nikas&King, 2005). However, as the crisis struck Greece, the flow of remittances to Albania were significantly affected and dramatically reduced; thus, the economic transnational and investment practices were struck accordingly, affecting the family housing strategies as well (Gemi, 2014).

The transnational housing strategies and especially, the practice of maintaining/acquiring a house in Albania constitutes a strategy common for the Albanians and the Voreioipiotes. Even people that regard Greece as their home country tend to maintain links with Albania and especially housing alternatives that demonstrate an ongoing connection and future plans that includes the country where they left from.

Particularly, remittances primarily aim to support family members back in Albania for consumption purposes e.g. care services and quality of life improvement. After the basic needs are catered for, they are used to extent or improve the quality of accommodation or to acquire/build a new house (savings and investment purposes) (Labrianidis, & Kazazi, 2006; Iosifides et al., 2007; Gemi, 2016; Vullnetari&King, 2016; Nikas&King, 2005).

Usually, Albanians improve or acquire properties located close to their home towns or villages and in proximity with family and kinship networks but they prefer, also, the urban centers. Concerning these practices, most participants were at pains to emphasize that emigrants settled in Greece tend to purchase houses in Albania with the aim to return, to provide an alternative for their children to choose in which country they would prefer to reside (Iosifides et al., 2007) or to nourish a transnational social and living place for them and their children. As Edwin (30) and Drita (34) are explaining:

We built a house. He [the father] was bringing money. Eh.. the money was a lot back then and for that they decided to build a new house in order to be more comfortable. [...] We have a house in X which is coastal area, it is a flat 80 square meters in the seaside. And in X we have built a 2-storey house, let's say 3-storey [...] he [the father] thought it will be good for us. [...] in order for us, his children to have something in the future, for income. At least to rent them or if you want to go and live there namely. They thought about it... their mentality is always to build houses in Albania. *Edwin (30)*

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<sup>24</sup> One sixth of Albanian GDP for the period 1993 – 2002, according to the research of Nikas & King (2005).

When we came to Greece we anticipated to buy a house in Tirana [...] to exist a kind of security... we are in a foreign country. One day they may try to kick us out. It was the fear of the parents. Therefore, they wanted a house to know that you can [go there]. *Drita (34)*

The percentage of homeownership in Albania rose rapidly after the migration period, from the 85.2 percent of owner occupiers before emigration to a 92.3 percent upon return (Labrianidis, & Kazazi, 2006). It is well documented that after 1990 Albania experienced a chaotic, non-regulated growth that was evident also in the housing production (Triantis&Vatavali, 2016). Specifically, between 1990 and 2004 in Albania, the construction of 135,000 urban dwellings in urban areas was initiated, accounting for almost one third of the dwelling units located in the cities (World Bank 2006, 47). However, a large percentage of these dwellings in Albania are uninhabited (Dalakoglou, 2010b).

Even though a lot of houses owned by emigrants in Albania are uninhabited, as our research partners are testifying, they do not wish to rent them as they regard them so personal that do not want others to “enter”. Also, because of the low prices of rent, the expected income would be insignificant, thus it could not compensate the psychological inconvenience. To best highlight this process, we here introduce the narratives of two of our respondents:

We have rented it only to our people namely to a family for 1-2 years. No, we don't give it [for rent] because it is the house where we were born and they were also my grandparents and there were some stuff or our own, we didn't want. *Zamira, (27)*

He is never going to rent it [...] No, he doesn't want, he doesn't because he says [it should be] family's. He didn't build them for others to stay. *Edwin, (30)*

This is not the case with other Balkan country emigrants, like Serbians, who do not pursue housing investments in the ‘old country’ as they do not intent to return, while they also have to pay mortgages for the houses acquired in their country of settlement (Bajić-Hajduković, 2009). On the contrary, Albanians tend to invest in housing back home and in most cases, they have to deal with financial obligations regarding accomodation simultaneously in both countries.

#### *Return*

*“From one point onwards, country is calling you back’. Now, how you are going to reply to that call... there are a lot of ways.” Ntinis, (28)*

The geographical proximity/distance in connection with the ‘newfound mobility’ (Dalakoglou, 2010a, 143) between Albania and Greece renders return expectations realistic (Labrianidis, & Kazazi, 2006). In the case of return, the motives are mainly psychological and cultural than purely socio-economic ones. However, the ones that return are better-off compared to their status in pre-migration period also with respect to housing conditions (Labrianidis, & Kazazi, 2006; Loizou, Michailidis & Karasavoglou, 2014). Some researchers discovered that return can act also as a coping practice against crisis in Greece (see Gemi, 2014). When asked to elaborate around situations of return some of our respondents reported their parents’ attitude towards return:

They [the parents] were saying that they want to return, but now unfortunately I think that this doesn't exist because my older sister is married with a Greek, she has 2 little girls. I am planning to get married, he is also Greek. Thus... my younger sister has also a relationship with Greek therefore I don't think they would like to leave. [...] From the moment they bought also a house here, they don't have...I don't think they want to return. [...] also [the fact] that we have built our lives here, I don't think they will go to live by themselves there, without their children. *Eleni, (35)*

They are planning to return at some point. Explicitly, they took, bought a house in the city [...] meaning they want at some point to return because they do not manage it physically to work in shitty jobs etc. But also, there is no point [to stay in Greece] meaning that my 2 siblings are already gone [abroad]. I do not know also what I am going to do. One day, in the future I may flee also. Therefore, there is no chance to stay or there will be no reason. There will be nothing to keep them somehow. *Erion, (31)*

Obviously, the location of their children affects parents' mobility as the research partners testify. Expressly, if their children base their lives in Greece and settle there with their families, the parents even though they tend to express their plans to return, are probably not going to realize them; they want to be close to their children and grandchildren and support them every way they can.

#### *SPITI*

The housing investment back in Albania is not only a financial/economic matter. It ensures a presence of the emigrants in the home country while it provides testimony of their success and development (Dalakoglou, 2010b). It constitutes a "patriotic act" of not abandoning their country by investing money, time and their future plans. Simultaneously, Albanians in Greece, are seeking to realize housing strategies towards homeownership. This action unveils their desire and effort to integrate in the country of settlement since it represents an establishment of membership in the local society as well (Vomvyla, 2013a).

Moreover, there is evidence that homeownership in the host country is negatively correlated to the separation of the immigrant from the local community as it demonstrates their intention to stay and commit to local society. Simultaneously, it constitutes a sign of robust economic status, a parameter positively correlated with integration (Papadopoulos et al., 2015). Most of the families of our participants (9 out of 15) acquired a house in Greece some years after their initial settlement there. However, the percentage of Albanians owning a house in 2001 was less than 10% according to Kandyliis, Maloutas and Sayas (2012) while in 2011 the Albanian homeowners were 72,509, 15% of the 480,586 co-nationals that permanently reside in Greece (Maloutas&Spyrellis, 2016).

There is also a tendency for parents to support their children in the acquisition of a house by purchasing it or by lending them money. Homeownership is a strong aspiration in

Albanian culture and rent is considered as a 'waste of money', a belief that is shared also by their Greek counterparts<sup>25</sup>.

Simultaneously, in many of the stories the doubts of the parents to acquire a house in Greece (Vomvyla, 2013a) originated from the experience of 1997 events of instability in Albania, their 'forced migration', as well as, the legal framework regarding migration status in Greece; where they cannot feel confident that they will be able to stay forever there. The Greek government announced in 2015 a process of easy citizenship provision (the Golden Visa process) to those who buy a house (Tonchev & Davarinou, 2017). However, the value of the house has to be at least 200.000€<sup>26</sup>. This creates another serious income-related burden for migrants to attain a legal status. Available data show that for the last 3 years, only one Albanian per year was able to achieve the legal status through that procedure. Adelina (25) describes the family housing strategy in connection with the existing insecurity as it follows:

As my father in general because it is a bit..., ok, we have experienced a lot and I believe that it cost him a lot what happened in Albania [in 1997]. Therefore, I could always distinguish [a fear] in my father. Especially, because we are migrants and imagine that after so many years, my parents just got identity and me with my sister still haven't taken identity because we are expecting the laws. [...] he was always afraid that 'you never know' anything can happen for example, 'why to give money for a house when tomorrow they can tell me go away from the country and I will lose it?' He always had this fear. Ok it is logical...

It is demonstrated the Albanians tend to invest in both countries in housing. The renovation or obtainment of a property back in Albania and the purchase of a house in the Greece, strengthens the feeling of belonging in both places preserving the connection with the old county but also integrating into the new as a manifestation of transnationalism (Al-Ali & Koser, 2002; Vomvyla, 2013b).

The infographic that follows is constructed from the experiences of our research partners in order to demonstrate some patterns of migration and housing pathways.

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<sup>25</sup> This belief was often manifested from the Greek youth groups that were researched in the wider project that this work belongs to.

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.immigration.gov.gr/idioktites-akiniton>

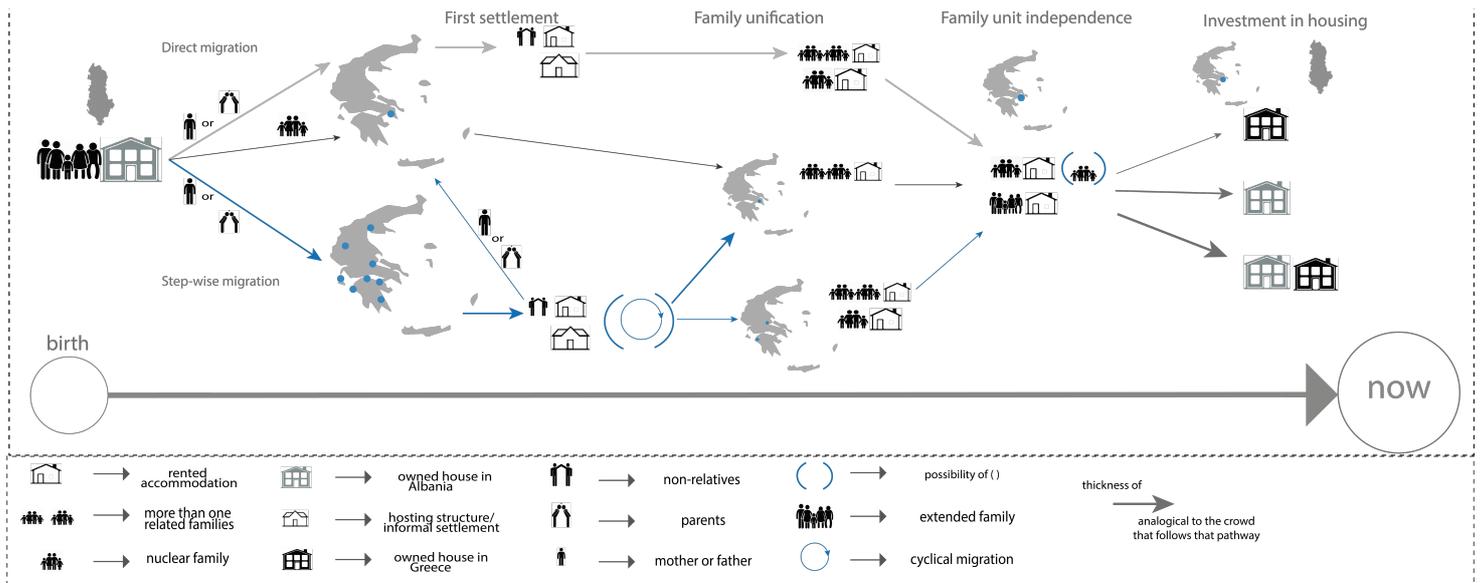


FIGURE 1: Patterns of emigration pathways in connection with transnational housing practices. Authors' elaboration (2018).

According to this research as it is portrayed by the infographic above, Albanian pioneer emigrants, usually the father or the couple, initially migrate to the Greek countryside where they stay in public open spaces, informal settlements or renting with other related or not emigrants. After an initial migration period characterized by cyclical flows back to Albania, usually, there is an attempt for family unification. During unification process the dominant housing practice proved to be cohabitation with other related families, normally as guests of the families that are already resided in Greece. The amelioration of their housing situation as they integrate in the local community regards the rent of a one-family residence where it is usual to host newly arrived families as well. The housing investment that comes along with the economic upgrading of the emigrants involves the housing renovation or acquisition of houses in the home country and/or the achievement of homeownership in the reception country.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Concerning the number of life narrations and the snowball sampling that is subject to biases, it would be dangerous to attempt sweeping generalizations about housing practices and strategies of this group but it will be interesting to recognize some emerging patterns that are related to transnational housing strategies.

The house can constitute a link for the owner/user to place and in the case of Albanians the fact that most of them maintain properties both in Greece and Albania creates a transnational connection with strong ties with the past and mixed geographical plans for the future. The dwelling, especially in Albania, covers the distance and the absence of the emigrant as his (sadly the dominant imaginary regards still the male owner/emigrant) presence is safeguarded by the investment he did back home supporting social networks who remained behind and honouring the country.

Moreover, as this research is investigating the housing strategies of the emigrants' families, it includes the will and imaginaries of both generations (1 and 1.5) while the connection to Albania differs significantly as they do not experience the same degree of allegiance to the old country. Usually the second generation do not regard the investment back in Albania as a smart strategy. Their parents though regard it significant as it fosters a cross border link with the past and even with a desirable future. This can constitute one of the reasons that Albanians demonstrate transnational family housing strategies because the feeling of identity and belonging differ between generations.

Although, the different imaginaries of belonging can explain to a degree the transnational housing practices, there are indications that the severe Greek crisis that provoked economic and material insecurity (Vullnetari&King, 2016) forces people to implement them in order to be able to survive in any of the two countries or even in both. Simultaneously, the Greek legal framework towards migrants does not provide them with security in order to cut any bridges with the country of origin (Gemi, 2014).

Moreover, the hypothesis that there exist common social and cultural capital between Albania and Greece was proved valid concerning the housing practices and strategies. Especially, the strong familistic culture, the significant kinship bonds as well as the inter-generational and kinship obligations and micro-solidarities are common characteristics of the two cultures that impact housing practices. According to these characteristics as it was proved by the research material there exist another commonality concerning the impact of family support. The family support on housing may create kinship obligations and power relations that can lead to control from the family over the receiver's life choices. A situation that is faced also by the Greeks of the same generation.

These findings may constitute a contribution to a better understanding of transnational migration processes, gender and cultural attribute following a field that has already been

introduced by significant scholars (Vaiou, 2007; Arapoglou & Sayas, 2009) but has to be reassessed through time as transnationalism is progressing. This work could assist in bridging social capital which regards the relations between Albanians and Greeks. It could also constitute one of the ways to improve the firsts' social incorporation and integration as well as to recognize the obstacles they are facing.

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## **PAPER 4**

### **The ongoing role of family in the provision of housing in Greece during the Greek crisis**

#### **ABSTRACT**

The importance of the institution of family in housing practices has deep historical roots in Greece, and families tend to follow certain housing strategies such as late emancipation from the parental home, intergenerational house transfers and financial support for housing. Housing provision and support especially for the young members constitutes usually a family matter, and it is relieved via family housing strategies. Moreover, today's crisis and austerity are threatening, through indirect budgetary cuts and rising taxation, the housing well-being of the citizenry which is supported only by family welfare. Nonetheless, the family still constitutes the main shock absorber of social and economic turbulence, but at what price?



## INTRODUCTION

Greece demonstrates a particular connection between family, housing and welfare that is associated with the Southern European regime of 'familistic welfare capitalism' (Papadopoulos & Roumpakis, 2013) or 'familialism by default' (Saraceno & Keck, 2010, 676). This regime stresses the eminent role of the family in most life activities like housing provision that elsewhere are managed by capitalism or the state. Expressly in Greece, access to housing is facilitated by the implementation of family strategies, while homeownership is promoted and supported by family assistance as a consequence of the absence of public housing as well as housing policies (Economou, 1987; Maloutas 2008). However, this support generates young people dependence from the family and allows extended control to their lives. The social reproduction of a family-centric culture limits the personal freedom of the individual.

Furthermore, the crisis provoked the general impoverishment of the population, leading to the over-indebtedness of households and the related housing precarity and deterioration of living conditions (Siatitsa & Annunziata, 2017). Crisis and austerity measures are attacking the wider public sector and its strong bonds with the family strategies and supplies (Vaiou, 2014b) striking accordingly family and its capability to support its members. Family absorbs the turbulence created by the crisis by offering delayed and less desirable housing solutions to its members as its deficits are coming into stagnation.

The aim of this research is to identify how Greek family support relieves young people from the impact of the crisis in their housing practices. For this purpose, qualitative research was utilised with the postmodern analytical framework of housing pathways as a core (Clapham 2005). The paper results from fieldwork conducted in Athens during 2017 and is part of a wider research project that involved around 50 participants aged 27–45 from lower-middle and middle-class families. The main technique comprised in-depth, face to face or self-recorded interviews based on an adaptation of biographical interviewing, focusing on the respondents', their households' and their families' housing pathways. Moreover, the observation and participant observation methods was employed in research partners' (households') housing practices in order to gain better insight according to the research question, complementing the interviews.

## THE SOUTHERN EUROPEAN WELFARE REGIME

The importance of the social institution of family in Southern Europe has deep historical roots (Ferrera 2010), and the citizens tend to follow the same familistic housing strategies such as late emancipation from the parental home, intergenerational co-residence, and residential spatial proximity to members of the same extended family. Specifically, providing and maintaining a safe and decent environment in order to accommodate the family members comfortably is one of the top worries in this geographical region (Knight & Stewart 2016) that is relieved via intergenerational micro-solidarities (Moreno & Mari-Klose, 2013, Di Felicianantonio & Gadhela 2016). The main scheme of the family micro-economy, especially before the current financial crisis, included the, traditionally male breadwinner benefiting from good job opportunities during his active years and a significant pension in retirement with which he supported the family but also kinship members in need (Naldini & Jurando 2013). Therefore, public institutions and the market had to provide only a little, allowing for family benefits and services to be underdeveloped (Mingione, 1995; Ferrera, 2010; Arundel & Ronald 2015).

Another 'product' of this system is the significance of homeownership, which was promoted intensively in public policy and the market in recent decades, rendering it a priority for the family. Homeownership constituted a good, stable and secure investment that could be used as accommodation or a source of income in connection with the absence of good investment alternatives (Allen et al. 2004) and a welfare state that could not cover the needs of the citizenry (Gentile 2016; Minguez 2016). Correspondingly, it constitutes culturally a standard prerequisite to forming one's family, a collective social desire, a representation of achievement, a status symbol, and a commitment to society and the family (Minguez 2016). This practice depended greatly on family savings because of a local underdeveloped mortgage market that until the 1990s 'forced' the implementation of family strategic plans to provide housing solutions for their members (Poggio 2008). Nevertheless, access to homeownership has been stratified unevenly across the generations (Forrest & Yip 2012), penalising those who originate from lower social strata families (Micheli & Rosina, 2010; Moreno & Mari-Klose, 2013; Ronald & Lennartz, 2018).

Furthermore, extended intergenerational cohabitation, another common practice in this region, has grown during the crisis (Marques et al., 2014). The factors that can explain the delay in the transition to autonomous housing solutions are labour market performance, the absence of welfare support, the cultural aspect of relying on family strategies, and especially the pursuit of homeownership as the most favourable and "decent" housing solution (Micheli & Rosina 2010; Serracant, 2015). Moreover, housing market constraints like the limited availability of quality and affordable rental housing also affect the choice to stay in the parental home until they are ready to form one's own household (Minguez 2016).

Considering the above, it is implied that many young Southern Europeans are supported by a 'cushion' of intergenerational solidarity and family welfare (Serracant, 2015). This has

been evident as well during the economic and employment downturns as family absorbs, as much as it can, the effects of recession (Moreno & Mari-Klose 2013).

## **CRISIS**

Nowadays, the citizens of the Southern European countries, whether employed in the local economy or unemployed, are facing a significant challenge in coping with the economic problems and new alternative life plans and trajectories. Furthermore, the recession in the region deteriorated the personal economic well-being of its citizens and the social risks have been collectivised (familiially) in order to be overcome. Nevertheless, the importance of family provision in housing has been growing throughout the crisis worldwide but still varies between different cultural contexts (see also Arundel & Ronald, 2015).

The Greek crisis in particular is not a housing market crisis but rather a sovereign debt crisis which brought about the implementation of austerity policies with mainly indirect, strict budgetary cuts that affect housing and threaten the local and already 'fragile social fabric' (Matthijs, 2014, 105). These cuts constituted the preconditions of the three bailout packages (2010, 2012, 2015) dictated by the European Central Bank, the European Commission and the International Monetary Fund (a.k.a. the Troika) (Papadopoulos & Roumpakis, 2013). As a result, housing distress rose from the impoverishment, unemployment and indebtedness of the citizens and households (Naldini & Jurado, 2013; Pinto & Guerra 2013; Serracant, 2015). Consequently, today 13–14% of the population in Attica lives under housing deprivation conditions, which accounts for 514,000 people—305,000 Greeks and 209,000 other nationalities (Arapoglou & Gounis, 2015).

The contemporary goal of every household is not its economic progress but the preservation of the current living circumstances by attempting to moderate expenses, show solidarity with deprived families, cohabit with other people in need – usually relatives and receive support from charity organizations (Sabaté 2016). Accordingly, the provision for housing, care and social protection is mainly a family commitment, rendering family as the main shock absorber of socio-economic turbulence (Arundel & Ronald, 2015; Martin, 2015; Moreno & Mari-Klose 2013; Naldini & Jurado, 2013).

## FAMILY SUPPORT AND STRATEGIES

Greek families are employing housing strategies in order to offer to their members housing solutions. In order to offer a view of the family support patterns, the infographic below was created according to the outcomes of this research.

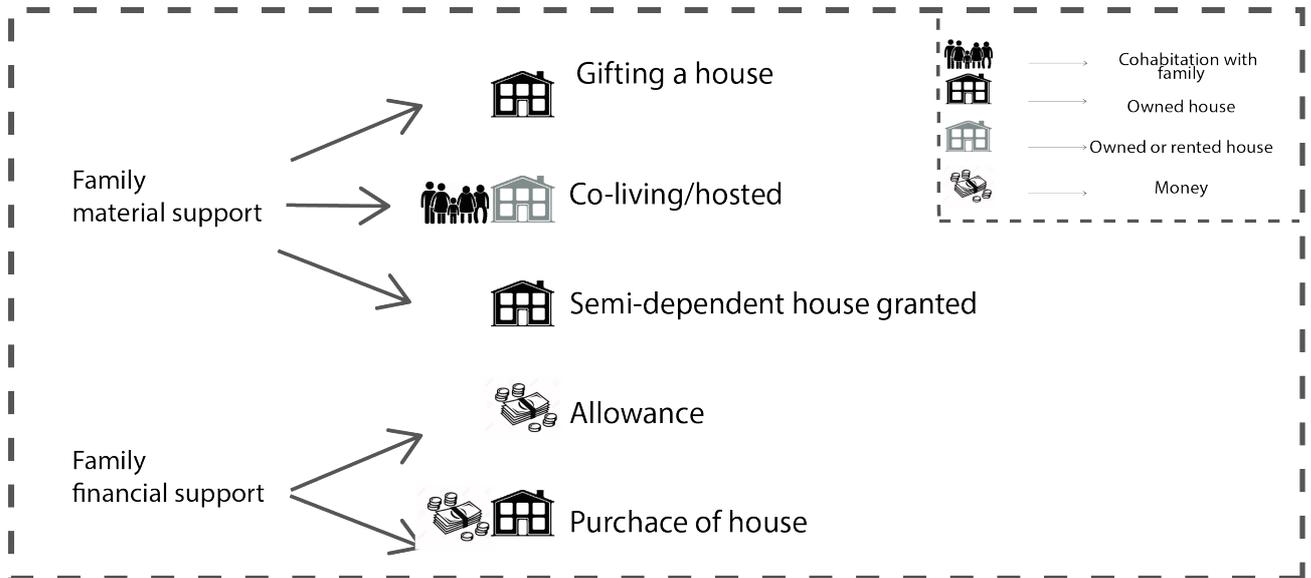


FIGURE 1 - Patterns of family and friend's (family) support. Source: Author's elaboration (2018)

The two main categories are material (in-kind) and financial support. In direct material support, the family is granting access for free to unused accommodation that it owns for a period of time, or, as is often the case, it offers it as a gift to younger members. In particular, because of the age of the respondents, the house gifts in most of the cases constituted their grandparents' house who had passed away. As discussed by Nicoleta (28):

Now I live with my sibling on the first floor where, when I finished school, the guy who was living there moved out. It was the house of my grandmother that she passed on to my father [. . .] We fixed it, renovated it, and I went downstairs [her parental house was on the first floor] The bills and other obligations [. . .] are being paid by my parents like the water bill, the electricity, etc. . . . Obviously, with the way we have ended up, [they pay] the property tax as well.

Another material support practice, which in this research was regarded by practitioners themselves as a short-term solution, was cohabitation with parents, grandparents or single—usually elderly—relatives in the latter's rented or owned accommodation. As Stamatis explains:

I was planning to go and live by myself. We were looking for two different houses; one for me, and one for my mother and my brother. But my plans changed because I became unemployed. So, we lived in another house all together. [. . .] I was able to sustain [the house] by myself but. . . I became unemployed, therefore I couldn't. It went on like this for a year [being unemployed] so the situation was tough and that's why it [living alone] couldn't be done.

Another scheme is financial support in the form of a money transfer for purchasing a house or a regular, long-term allowance of an unspecified amount. The first one regards the investment on a property in order for the young member to acquire a house that can be used as a permanent residence or as an investment for the young person. 'Instead of paying rent, we would pay the loan instalment, and in the end, we will keep the house', as Eleftheria (29) stressed in her interview about her mother's decision to buy a house for her and her sisters. Moreover, as the crisis struck Greece and impacted the value of the houses, people have preferred to invest abroad where the housing prices are still on the rise (see also Stergiou L. 2015).

Concerning the long-term allowance, it constitutes regular financial support without which most of the recipients stressed that they cannot make ends meet even though they do not always acknowledge it as housing support. As Athanasia (28) elucidates when she was asked if she can maintain her house by herself:

Yes, but I didn't because I had other things . . . I was doing other things. Because it is really difficult to maintain a house in Athens with 800 euros [monthly] and live.

## **IMPACT OF THE CRISIS ON FAMILY STRATEGIES**

Through the narratives of the participants, the more tangible impacts of crisis regarded the cancelation of family housing strategies because of financial difficulties. Indeed, many of the more affluent respondents already had the structure of their future house, and they are expected to finish them when they or their parents have the financial capability. 'Class is another social relation that is reproduced and contested within the home' as Blunt and Dowling (2006, 117) are arguing. Therefore, the overcoming of the housing problems depend on the family financial means rendering it a class matter.

Indeed, the most affluent families seem to employ alternative practices to support their children, as in the story of Dimitra (30), who reported that the crisis struck her parents' ability to build houses inside the parental housing plot. They mentto offer her and her

brother the houses to accommodate their future families. However, as they could not achieve that anymore, they renovated Dimitra's grandmother's house downstairs of her parental home in order to live with her fiancé. The 'gifting' and renovation of her grandmother's house was also considered a kind of 'dowry' for her.

Indeed, when families are hit by crisis and austerity, they struggle to manage the housing needs of younger members with the assistance of unused houses that belong to the extended family. However, in case they cannot fulfill their housing plans or are unable to find another alternative, there is a tendency for parents to offer the parental home to their children when it is their property, and they instead buy or rent a smaller house, or move to a smaller unused owned accommodation of lower quality.

Family seems to be the 'necessary evil' as the people employed in local economy cannot succeed their life and housing plans:

He cannot form a home and get married with his girlfriend because neither of them has a stable job. [...] Even though he is also old he doesn't form a family and he is not getting married and they cannot have a child in that way.

Olga (42) is narrating for her older brother, a Polytechnic school graduate, a profession with high social status and once high potential in the labour market.

Another implication of the crisis is the fact that young people were 'obliged' to accept housing solutions that were not eager to. Expanding on the story of Dimitra (30), she explains her hesitation about living in the same building with her parents:

Alright, maybe as young people we would like to make our start somewhere a bit different. Eh . . . Somewhere totally independent, without someone's parents living upstairs. Not that they are intrusive, it doesn't mean something like this. Just, like a bit for the essence of independence, full independence. But . . ., ok, the rent [that we do not pay], ok, is a really important factor in order to decide to live here and to be able to manage essentially our finances as well as we can and exploit this 'breath' (relief) that the absence of rent is offering us.

Furthermore, a changing perception of homeownership was encountered where, although it is still an aspiration, concerning people in less affluent positions, it can be also a source of stress as it is linked to new taxation and expenses. To best highlight this process, I here introduce the narrative of Mitsos (33) about a house he was granted:

I am thinking of giving it away because it is not profitable [. . .] My taxes are rising [as a homeowner] and there is also the 'ENFIA'<sup>27</sup>. . . There are a lot of issues. And I am also stressed constantly because the ladies (renters) are not paying the electric bills, nor the water [. . .] Therefore, in general, it is a bit of a fuss and the whole situation is not worth it. And I am thinking to give it away.

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<sup>27</sup> A taxation that was initially to be implemented once for every landed property in 2011 but became an annual contribution, rendering ownership more and more unaffordable and transforming it from a strategic source to a burden, a worry (Balabanidis et al, 2013).

Housing, as was mentioned already, is also a source of income, and this is more evident during this hectic period where the income opportunities for young people are scarcer. Olga's housing story is self-explanatory of this strategy:

The situation was the following. He [a friend] was staying there, but he stayed part-time as he was going back and forth abroad. So, he wanted a friend to take care of the house. Therefore, it was beneficial both for him and me because the price of rent was really cheap. Essentially just a formality.

Nonetheless, as the crisis evolved:

In order to survive, we rented (his room) on Airbnb. My [former] flatmate now stays in his parent's home.

Even though the house had always been an asset for Greek families nowadays it is appropriated as such in the expense of the young person's housing autonomy, who is entitled to return to the nest or employ other housing practices that are not preferable. However, in this case, the friend of Olga exploits the family property by renting it to her and 'airbnb'ing' the other half in order to secure an income while he is being hosted back by his family avoiding house's expenses.

A 'housing pathway loupe' is encountered as young people in every downturn are aided by a kinship network and especially by returning to the parental house or accepting temporary housing solutions given to them until they achieve a more permanent one, usually homeownership again with the family assistance.

Simultaneously, the sacrifices that parents realize for their children 'will be repaid' in the future, when they will be in need of care. Intra-familial care obligations burdain the family socially but also practically in combination to the almost complete absence of welfare state (Zambarloukou, 2015). Also, as the parents invest widely in their children's social and financial upward mobility and housing security, they expect in return that their children will realize their parents' ambitions which normally consist of the latter's unrealized personal dreams for social mobility (Valentine, et al., 2003) A linear conventional life-trajectory that is still the dominant and social acceptable imposed by the family as well. Often in discussions it is stressed that the parents, '*ehoun logo*' ('they have a say') in the lives of their children and children's families as long as they are contributing to their household wellbeing.

To sum up, the crisis is mainly impacting family strategies and, consequently, the housing practices of young people, who are limited to accepting any housing solution that can be offered. Scarce employment opportunities dictate them to rely mainly on family support for housing. Therefore, they are usually limited to waiting (extended co-residence or renting) for a housing solution and/or accepting others (being granted or renting) that may not be preferable. Also, is it impacting the perception of homeownership and the need to appropriate housing as an investment, even when they do not have another alternative for

autonomous living. This dependence brings about a higher family control on individual lives as the beneficiaries are accountable about their actions.

## CONCLUSION

To sum up, housing and everyday life in Greece have been restructured rapidly in recent years because of the crisis and the related austerity measures. Human dignity is ruled by the wills of political and economic elites, and housing is being appropriated as a liquid asset threatened by violent capital accumulation, dismantling this basic human right (Alexandri & Janoschka 2018). Meanwhile, family, the main welfare provider, is put under extreme pressure to cover the needs of its members, moving the obligation and the cost away from employers and the state (Papadopoulos & Roumpakis 2013). The crisis and austerity measures, therefore, strike the family and its capability to support its members accordingly.

The crisis is not portrayed directly in the housing pathways of young people in Greece but rather indirectly through hectic employment opportunities and the postponement of upward work mobility that lead to different housing practices and usually to family strategies that support the young members. Late emancipation in connection with a long wait for housing solutions from the family as well as acceptance of unsatisfying housing solutions and/or appropriation of the house as an asset in order to increase (if there is any) income are some of the visible impacts. However, another important observation is the change of perception towards homeownership, an ideal in Greek culture, that can now be faced as a worry because of the related taxation.

Simultaneously, the support that is stressed here and is intensively anticipated by young people, presupposes that they should 'obey' the rules and imaginaries that family attributes to them, as the acceptance of support presupposes the acceptance of control. In the words of Schwartz (1967, 4) 'assistance comes "with strings attached"'. The recipient should 'accept the order of the giver'. Simultaneously, as the well-being of young people is dependent on family solutions, this reinforces the existing social inequity between those who hold property wealth and those who do not.

To conclude, this paper has offered some insights into the crucial and controversial role of the family in the housing provision of young people in Greece during the recent global financial crisis. It aims to contribute to the investigation of the 'politics of austerity' in the Greek housing context. There is always a need for further investigation of the impact of the crisis and the role of family welfare as well as the sociopolitical consequences of it.

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## A BRIEF AFTERWORD

This work seeks to contribute to the thematic areas of the geographies of family, youth and the geographies of sexualities as well as gender and migration studies by investigating several dimensions of family housing support in Southern Europe and especially Greece. Family support was analysed in connection with gender and sexual identity of the receivers, ethnicity and austerity. The specificity of the period of the research (2017-2018) is important as Greece is undergoing financial difficulties posing challenges to an already weak welfare state, the labour market and especially young people seeking employment, while it severely affects family incomes, the main welfare provider, through public budgetary cuts and increased taxation (Moreno & Mari-Klose, 2013).

During this recession period, except for fleeing the country, young - and not only - people have to rely on family support in order to achieve a viable housing solution. Therefore, Greeks have one choice – or they are used to think that<sup>28</sup> - that of a housing solution tailored for them according to family abilities but also family expectations for them. Gender roles are imposed through the family housing strategies as well as other conventional ideas that define the housing pathway of the receiver.

Most of the people I interviewed were stressing ‘how lucky they are’, ‘how relieved’ and in case they were still living with their parents they were insisting that their parents do not bother them at all. Because of the luck of choices that limits ambitions and raises insecurity, young people are welcoming the family support. They usually regard it as the only alternative and they are content with it, as it is the easiest and most secure option. However, they do not seem to recognize that this support can also be a trap and people seem satisfied with the limited options as long as they are offered a solution.

To sum up the findings of this work, some contradictions will be identified below; Concerning gender, it was demonstrated that as society and even family in Greece is patriarchal in principle, the family housing strategies will also be gendered. Women's gender role is indissolubly linked to their kinship obligations. Thus, they are receivers of specific housing support that assists the continuance of their role as carers. Correspondingly, as they are also primarily responsible for the everyday functions of the family, they tend to choose housing solutions that will assist them on receiving support from other – especially – female kinship members. Through the family housing support, traditional gender roles and intrafamilial hierarchies are reproduced and create a vicious circle for women in the Greek family and kin.

Sexual orientation impacts family housing strategies in similar ways; the hegemony of patriarchy, the importance of intra-familial solidarity and obligations impose certain heteronormative gender roles to preserve the family welfare. In that way, LGBTQ+ in

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<sup>28</sup> There is also the choice of clash/struggle but because of the familistic culture in Greece, housing movements were always weak (see more Siatitsa, 2014).

Greece can face discrimination and even isolation as they do not fulfill the traditional Greek imaginary of a heteronormative lifepath. This may have implications on the financial and housing support they are receiving. Also, they face an indirect impact on their lives as they cannot pursue their life plans as they are restricted and are concealing part of their identity to continue receiving support by the family. Family welfare hegemony and internal hierarchies are manifested in many ways and one of them seems to be the rejection of non-conventional sexual and gender subjectivities.

Concerning the ethnic dimension, my research revealed that Albanian emigrants seem to employ similar family housing strategies. Like the Greek family, Albanian housing practices and family support seem to be dictated by cultural characteristics defining family bonds, gender relations and housing culture. Their family strategies involve also transnational investments both in the new and old country, even though the younger generation is not so eager to make use of the properties in the old country. Again, the imaginary of the parents for the needs of the younger generation diverge from the actual ones. The acceptance of the housing support again in this case reproduces power relations that are impacting together with extra-familial hierarchies (ethnicity, class) their housing practices and pathways.

Austerity also seems to strengthen the dependence on the family welfare mechanism for housing provision/acquisition as it is the most active agent of welfare in Greece. Hence, receivers of this support are accountable to family and he/she has to fulfill the expectations imposed by the family. The imaginary of the family for its members has to be adhered to in order to ensure the offer of the support.

The findings of papers of this collection show that the acceptance of the housing support brings about the acceptance of control, as 'goods are not only economic commodities but vehicles and instruments for realities of another order: influence, power, sympathy, status, emotion' (Levi-Strauss, 1965, 76). Gift giving is considered a mode of social control (Schwartz, 1967) and this can be elevated also when houses are offered as a gift. As every gift-exchanging dyad entails a moral dominance of one to the other (ibid.), likewise 'support' produces power relations inside family. It was also shown that housing support can provoke a 'guilt' feeling to the receiver that is important for future reciprocity of support, through intra-familial and kinship micro-solidarities. Therefore, both parts acknowledge that the supported children will accept together with the housing support the debt to reciprocate through obedience to family life obligations and later care services.

Simultaneously, family members who benefited by family housing strategies should 'obey' the imaginaries that are attributed to them. It is also demonstrated that housing support as a gift includes the transmission of giver's idea to what receivers need or desire (Schwartz, 1967). Consequently, the beneficiary accepts also the giver's perception for them. This was demonstrated clearly in the gender and sexual identity dimension of the support. Greek family tends to impose on its children prototypes for social behavior according to its ideals and society's norms. At the same time it creates a relationship of dependence between its members leading to an inability of the latter to freely take risks and decide their life path. They are perceived as 'incompetent' to live by themselves, they are presumed as 'property' of the family without equal rights inside the family house (Kerentzis, 2015). Indeed, rights

can be envisaged as unimportant when the adult children are still supported by their parents.

Moreover, the support from the family may also impose the sacrifice of one's privacy; Greek family members are involved a lot with each other, both emotionally and practically, in the context of intergenerational support. Thus, family housing strategies can involve cohabitation or proximity that may lead to a lack of privacy and isolation. Privacy is a luxury that 'in each civilization, as it advanced, those who could afford it chose the luxury of a withdrawing place' (Schwartz, 1968, 743). According to this, people in Greece today do not have this luxury as housing is supported by strategies that sustain and strengthen the institution of family and its members' interdependence. When there is lack of this choice to withdraw in your everyday life, there is no release from social relations and a needed outbreak from everyday problems and irritations. However, there are always places of privacy even in the most close knit households but can these substitute the privacy that the person needs when the only welfare agent– family – presupposes proximity and emotional dependence?

## **POLICY REFORMS AND ACTIVATION**

Before the global financial crisis, the Greek state provided high pensions and in connection with the abundance of job positions for people during their active years, the whole family was able to sustain strategies to support its members and realise housing strategies as well. Nevertheless, during the last years pensions are being severely reduced, no money is left in the social security funds and people in their active years cannot always find a job in the local economy. However, even if they do, are usually still in need of family or kin assistance in order to cover their basic needs. Therefore, inter-generational micro-solidarities are the most common type of temporary relief from the economic downturns especially concerning housing.

Accordingly, housing support and all the support that family welfare provides to its members, create a continuing inter-generational imbalance of debt, prolonging the dependence relationship between them with different kinds of support services at different age stages of the family members. Thus, there is need for policies to "break" this eternal circle and promote autonomous citizens liberating family from the pressure to provide. There is a need thus, to terminate the absence of welfare state policies supporting the Greek family but also the individual. A way to promote more adequate policies could be assisted from the analysis and critique of the cultural and financial mechanism of family welfare that is neither feasible any more, nor healthy for the emotional development of the members involved.

As Clapham (2009) suggests, good housing policies are the ones which allow people to achieve the housing solution that respects their needs and expectations. There should be a policy reform that will enable individuals and every kind of household – not only the conventional familial one - to exercise control over their housing practices and strengthen

their ability to control their housing pathway also in later life (Clapham, 2005). Simultaneously, as family policy is connected in familistic states with housing policies it is significant to recognize that family comes 'in all shapes and sizes'. In that way all kinds of families can benefit by the related policies. This is also a fact that should be taken into account to free people from imposed prototypes of 'appropriate life choices'.

A policy that is usually suggested includes the use of empty and underused building stock through public policy that mobilize the small-scale owners providing affordable housing and activate the construction sector towards reuse/refurbishment and energy upgrading like it is already applied in the projects for refugees and homeless (Siatitsa&Annunziata, 2017). The exploitation of public immobile property that is largely underused could participate in the scheme above. This project is better than a long-term housing policy and can redress the property concentration as well as the housing stock degradation in urban settings.

Concerning especially the young people, in Greece, there are no housing policies<sup>29</sup> targeted at them as it is assumed that their pathway is pre-determined and assisted by the family welfare. Therefore, alternative housing trajectories are not supported. Policies should engage with the new patterns of housing arrangements like shared households and facilitate further the realization of these desirable living arrangements with policies safeguarding the tenant with more flexibility of rental contracts and cheaper forms of transaction (Bricocoli&Sabatinelli, 2016). Moreover, because the Greek housing stock (large numbers of relatively small apartments, suitable for small households) are oriented mainly to shelter nuclear families (Maloutas & Karadimitriou, 2001; Malouta & Spyrellis, 2015), there is a need of a functional rearrangement of the stock with design solutions that can be adapted to alternative and changing uses.

In Greece, home was always a political tool with the assistance of patronage and clientelism. Today, in the midst of a sovereign crisis the geopolitical dimension of home is signified either both as a physical place and as an imaginary. It is therefore the citizens' obligation to search for different approaches in housing, discovering alternative practices that fit their needs. All these changes in a family-centric and absent-state society cannot happen without the active participation of the citizens for their claims. There is need for engagement in social and especially housing movements and struggles which will question the existing familistic and clientelistic model that is reproducing socioeconomic inequalities.

Reflecting on the ambitions and limitations of this work, it is important to stress that more research is needed on housing and family in the wake of the current economic upheaval. Housing practices and especially the family support in a context where there is no alternative should be researched more thoroughly and through time. Specifically, it will be important investigating in depth the class dimension of the housing practices in connection to family support. Though my attempt was to interview people from different socio-economic backgrounds, my research partners are at best illustrative of different middle-class experiences. Therefore, there is need for a wider group of participants to investigate

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<sup>29</sup> Since February 2019, a new housing policy of rent subsidy is granted for every under-privileged households of one or more people.

the multi-faceted class dimension. Moreover, the intensity of intra-family hierarchies should be observed over time as well as their contribution to the consolidation of wider and longer-lasting hierarchical structures in space-social mobility, particularly in the field of housing and habitation.

*The real political task in a society such as ours is to criticize the workings of institutions that appear to be both neutral and independent, to criticize and attack them in such a manner that the political violence that has always exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked, so that one can fight against them.*

*Michel Foucault in Chomsky and Foucault (1974, 171)*

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# APPENDIX

## APPENDIX 1

After the initial narrations, further narrations were elicited based on the biographical events just described via questions concerning each housing practice and family support incident implicated in each narrator's housing pathway:

- a. Where was each house located and why? Were they located in proximity to family and kinship networks?,
- b. What was the status of each property, i.e., rented, owned, inherited?,
- c. Who was the owner or person paying for the house?
- d. What was the connection of each house with the family and family housing strategies?
- e. Are there any other houses that the family (parents, siblings and grandparents) own, and if so, what is their property status? What family plans exist for them according to housing strategies (inheritance/dowry/selling/expanding/dividing)?
- f. Are there any other houses to which the person feels attached, and if so, what is the status of this property and what is its connection with the family?

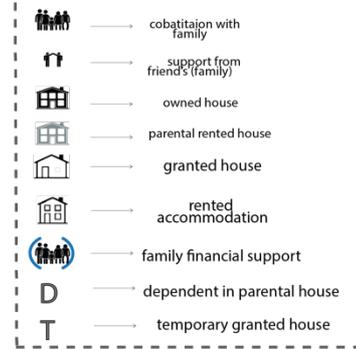
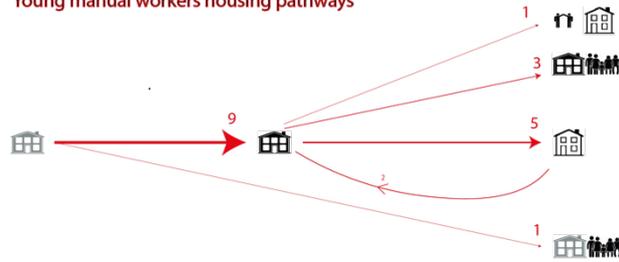
Through the narrations and follow-up questions, the following themes were covered:

- Support from the family
  - Parents and siblings
  - Grandparents
  - Other relatives
- Property of family and personal property
  - How did they acquire the properties?
  - What are their perspectives on inheritance?
- Support from friends/kinship
- Absence of support
  - Was there a need for support?
  - Was there alternative support from family?

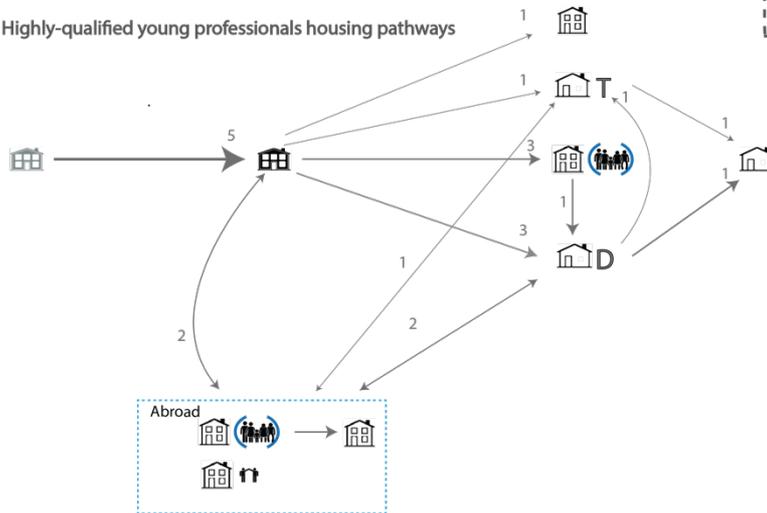
## APPENDIX 2

### Housing pathways of high-skilled professionals and manual workers

#### Young manual workers housing pathways

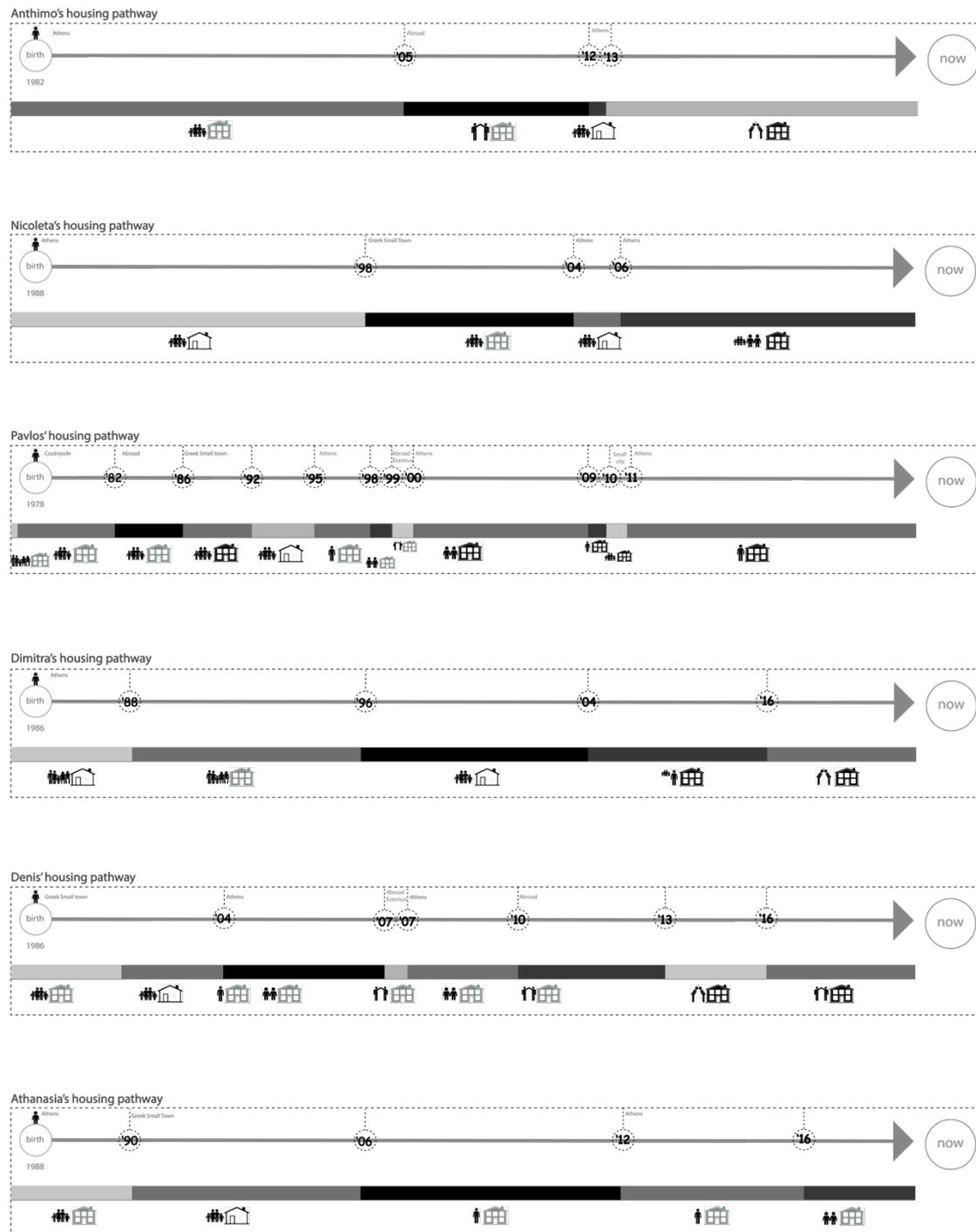


#### Highly-qualified young professionals housing pathways



## APPENDIX 3

Indicative housing pathways of certain research partners:





## APPENDIX 4

Key dates in Albanian history (from the bibliography of Paper 3):

1910 – 1913	Balkan Wars
1912	Dissolution of ottoman empire – Proclamation of Albania independence at Vlore, 28 November
1913	Albanian nation and borders' establishment
1928	Ahmet Zogu croens himself King Zog I
1939	Invasion of Italian army and occupation
1940	Borders forced on local communities
1944	Enver Hoxza with the partisans seize control – establishment of socialism – first interconnection with USSR and China
1948	Cominform break with Yugoslavia
1953	Death of Stalin
1961	Albania is leaving the Soviet Bloc – Citizens are prohibited of moving from countryside to towns
1967	Albania is experiencing a cultural revolution including tha banning of religion
1978	Climax of the rift with China
1970s – 1980s	Cut of state external relations, isolation.
1985	Enver Hoxha dies and is succeeded by Alia
1987	Albania and Greece are recognising current borders
1990	Oppositional political parties legalised, end of socialism – ban of religion is lifted. Rebellion resulted by the ban of migration and good shortages. 800 Albanians cross the borders between 30 and 31/12/1990. Until 1990 there were no Albanian passports.
1990s	Irregular massive migratory movements, mainly male migrants. Question of the status of Greek minority in the Southern Albania - Northern Epirotes.
1990 - 1992	Democratic turn of the state
1991	First elections –Socialist Party of Albania (Partia Socialiste e Shqipërisë) won, political offspring of the Albanian Communist Party. Party passed a law (7652 /1992 ) on the 'Privatization of State Housing'
1992	Albanian anti-communist democratic Party under Dr Salih Berisha came into power
1993	A new series of laws including law on the 'restitution and compensation of ex-owners' (7698/1993) dictated the 'return' of properties to the kinship groups that had owned them in the period before the SecondWorldWar.
1993 - 1994	Incidents of nationalism – deportations, killings, terrorism.

1994 - 1996	Period of economic growth.
1996 – 1997	Bank-like pyramid schemes – 2 billion of dollars vanished – uprisings.
1996 - 2000	Crisis period – pyramid scheme collapsing.
1997 - 1998	Migrants' legalization procedure in Greece first introduced.
2000 - 2002	Period of economic growth.
Early 2000s	Irregular migratory movements and employment evolved into permanent family settlement
2001	The term integration was first introduced into the Greek legislation
2006	Legalization of illegally built houses in Albania
2001, 2004, 2007	Successive regularization programmes form migrants from the Greek government.

## APPENDIX 5

Photo taken in September 2017 in Tirana, Albania: A cable toll.

An urban chaotic image like the transnational, complex, strong or weaker links of Albania with the countries that emigrants are settled.

