

4. Illegal Markets in a Collapsing Economy

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² For an Overview by the editors see *Internet Journal of Criminology* 2014

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Abstract

Greece's debt crisis, shrinking economy, surging unemployment and the continuous waves of illegal immigrants have transformed Athens, once considered one of Europe's safest and most lively capitals, into a city with a growing public sense of insecurity and aesthetic decadence. In particular, the presence of a large number of people engaged in varying activities in urban public spaces, as well as the emergence of deprived neighbourhoods in the heart of the city, have resulted in deviant and criminal behaviour, which, along with the economic decline, are destroying the remaining nodes of the legal economy in the city. The chapter presents preliminary results of ongoing small-scale research. First, it addresses the impact of increasing irregular immigration on the development of illegal markets in Athens. Secondly, it examines the role of economic, political and social forces in the trend towards continuing illegal immigration and inner city neighbourhood decline, in the context of urban sociology. Specifically, it will show the degradation of an inner city district overpopulated by (undocumented) immigrants and the effects of expanding criminal networks. Thirdly, the study outlines the policies followed by successive Greek governments in relation to the immigrant population that has entered Greece during the last two decades.

4.1 Introduction

Greece's debt crisis, shrinking economy, surging unemployment and the continuing waves of illegal immigrants have transformed Athens, once considered one of Europe's safest and most businesslike capitals, into a city with a growing public sense of insecurity (Carassava, 2011; Hideg and Manchin, 2007: 4; *see also* European Crime and Safety Survey, 2005: 3, 64, 66, 69; Zarafonitou, 2008).³ In particular, the presence of a large number of people engaged in varying activities in urban public spaces, as well as the emergence of deprived neighbourhoods in the heart of the city, have resulted in deviant and criminal behaviour, which, together with the economic crisis, are destroying the remaining nodes of the legal economy in the city.

The chapter presents preliminary results of ongoing small-scale research. First, it addresses the impact of increasing irregular immigration on the development of illegal markets in Athens. Secondly, it examines the role of economic, political and social interests in continuing illegal immigration and inner city neighbourhood decline, in the context of urban sociology. Specifically, it will show the degradation of an inner city district overpopulated by (undocumented) immigrants and the effects of expanding criminal networks. Thirdly, the study will outline the policies followed by successive Greek governments in relation to the immigrant populations that have entered Greece during the last two decades.

³ The cited bibliography refers to the period 2000 to 2005. Particular attention is paid to the work of Hideg and Manchin, according to whom 'The locals in Athens and Brussels (and to a smaller extent Londoners) are consistently dissatisfied as to how often they have to confront criminality and deprived area characteristics', Fig. 3, p. 4.

4.2 Theoretical Context: 'the Parasite'

Current analysis regards illegal immigration as an autonomous market, a self-reproducing system that can maintain a loose relationship with other systems consisting of its own environment and its own parts (Orton and Weick, 1990). It is a market that feeds off and interacts with other legal or illegal markets, such as real estate and the rental market, drug trafficking, money transfer/money laundering, human trafficking, prostitution, panhandling, etc. This analysis can provide a useful insight into illegal markets and, in particular, into illegal immigration and migrant smuggling.

Migrant smuggling will be defined as a business transaction between two willing parties involving movement across borders, usually by illegal means. It occurs with the consent of a person or persons, and the transaction usually ends upon arrival. Human trafficking, in contrast, begins with one depriving another of the freedom of choice by using threats, force, coercion or deception for the purpose of exploitation (*i.e.*, putting another party into slavery-like conditions). It is a violation of basic human rights, which can occur across and within borders. Despite the differences between migrant smuggling and human trafficking, smuggled persons may become victims of human trafficking at any point in the smuggling process. Illegal immigration is the result of smuggling as an organized group process, as well as being done by individuals. Human trafficking is not included in this research, while migrant smuggling is discussed only in so far as it helps the analysis of illegal immigration.

As with legal markets, illegal markets emerge only when there is supply and demand for the goods offered. However, for an illegal market to develop, some more conditions must be met. On the demand side, the goods illegally offered are cheaper than those offered legally, while at the same time the purchaser is willing to bear the costs and (potential) risks arising from the illegality of the purchase. On the supply side, illegal markets depend not only on the expected profitability for the supplier, but also on the supplier's financial and organizational capacities to produce and/or distribute the goods and circumvent law enforcement controls. The supplier as well as the purchaser must be willing to overcome the difficulties and risks associated with the illegality of his/her activities. In a similar way to legal markets, the purchaser can also be a supplier. Therefore, in migrant smuggling the immigrant is the purchaser, and the smuggler is the supplier, while in the labour market the immigrant is the supplier and the employer the purchaser, etc. Yet, these relationships also involve intermediary rings working as suppliers to the immigrants and the employers, or the landlords (Beckert and Wehinger, 2011: 3).

Illegal markets have been defined as 'places where goods and services are exchanged whose production, sale and consumption are forbidden or strictly regulated by the majority of national states and/or by international legislation' (Arrlachi, 1998: 203). The determination of which goods and services are available in illegal markets depends on the relevant regulations. However, illegal markets are determined not only by prohibition and regulation, but also by existing opportunities for their development, in particular, the efficiency of control and law enforcement mechanisms that seek to prevent and combat activities in illegal markets. If these mechanisms break down, as can happen in times of political struggle and internal conflict, then organized crime can emerge as a result of inadequate law enforcement activity and anomie.

Illegal markets constitute the source of income for organized crime. Crime, like any other economic activity, can be supplied through various market structures. The logic of a market is to locate economic activities where they are most profitable.

The notion of illegal markets is not fixed. Activities in illegal markets are diverse and can comprise markets that are primarily legal (*e.g.* accommodation, labour, travel) but involve as well a high level of illegal activities. In many instances the legality of the market itself is an important condition for the development and success of illegal activities. Owing to the complex phenomena of illegality in markets, it is not easy to distinguish illegal markets simply in terms of the products traded in them (Beckert and Wehinger, 2011: 3; Wehinger, 2011).

There are three key parameters that differentiate the types of immigration from each other (Ethier, 1986): first, whether migration is intended to be temporary or permanent; secondly, whether migration involves skilled or unskilled labour; and thirdly, the legality of migration, which is relevant to the present study. These parameters are not of equal importance, and some can be ignored. Thus, this chapter will focus on illegal immigration of unskilled labour, both temporary and permanent.

Criminal organizations, and in particular migrant smuggling organizations, are affected by the changing nature of law enforcement activities and policies. The market for illegal immigration has developed for three main reasons: first, the restrictions on legal immigration imposed by industrialized countries; secondly, the increasing demand for entry into these countries; and thirdly, the comparatively low risks and high profits involved in migrant smuggling (Schloenhardt, 2002: 74).

Analysis has shown that the organizational and operational forms of migrant smuggling are similar to those of a provider of legitimate services, with some additional characteristics that the illegal market requires. In order to maximize the economic return on their activities, migrant smugglers use existing structures and concepts in legitimate businesses, such as organization, human resources, supply, production, distribution and finance. Yet, it is important to recognize that the immigrants involved are also customers and victims of smuggling organizations. Any legislative and law enforcement activity dealing with this needs to take into account that migrant smuggling, unlike other organized criminal activities, involves human beings (often described as ‘human cargo’) (Schloenhardt, 2002: 74-75).

There are numerous opinions with regard to the costs and benefits of immigration (Hanson, 2007: 19-26). Critics of illegal immigration argue that an influx of illegal immigrants brings high economic costs by lowering domestic wages and raising public expenditure in some areas, such as health care (Ethnos, 2011a)⁴ and education. In terms of strict economic policy, it does support arguments in favour of restricting illegal immigration, but how much would this cost?

It can be argued that funds spent on reducing illegal immigration would vastly exceed the income gained from eliminating the net fiscal transfer to illegal immigrants. However, illegal immigration is not only a cost-benefit issue. Since it is illegal, it is also related to the underground economy, so the cost-benefit ratio is difficult to estimate. With

⁴ The Minister of Health revealed during a parliamentary debate on 4 April 2011 and 10 June 2011 that the costs of health care for illegal migrants have risen to €150 million annually over the last five years (*see* <www.adonisgeorgiadis.gr/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=134&Itemid=202&limitstart=6>).

regard to Greece,⁵ as a ‘host’ or ‘transit’ state, the high rate of illegal immigration certainly creates wealth for individual entrepreneurs or groups and even political capital. Various markets are constructed and reproduced around illegal immigration, while having a number of other consequences. In addition, it is very difficult to estimate costs and benefits for the immigrants, although the continuing stream of immigration indicates that the benefits outweigh the risks in undertaking illegal migration.

Illegal migration has developed its own ‘infrastructure’ for organizing transfers and clandestine border crossings, as well as support mechanisms after arrival, such as housing, employment, documentation, protection of rights and provision of legal aid, etc. in the host or the transit country (demand/offer). This ‘infrastructure’ reproduces demand from potential migrants, who, after successful entry into the country, send money home – which encourages potential immigrants. The system is also supported simultaneously by accountants, lawyers, politicians, civil servants, civil society organizations, corporate executives and professional criminals in the host or transit country (offer), but the main factors driving its reproduction are the continuing wars and conflict worldwide.

From the immigrants’ point of view the system hinges on the hope (value) of a better life (target) and safety, while the interests of the various entrepreneurs and criminal networks, as well as of other interested parties, are wealth, power and expansion of their operation.

Illegal migration of unskilled people is not an outcome of different, unconnected causes, but a system with its own logic (Lieckweg, 2001). The first priority for illegal migration is to remain illegal as a business. Only under these conditions can it achieve its purposes. Migrant smuggling and illegal migration can be understood as a ‘parasite’ in the sense of Michel Serres’ communication theory – developing nests and then colonizing the systems with which they communicate and finally transforming system aims and outcomes in order to serve the parasite (1980/2009).

Serres’ concept of the parasite provides grounds for a rethinking of basic categories in human social science. The parasite is essential to thinking about communication and transformation in systems. Parasitism operates through the logic of taking without giving. Nevertheless, the parasite makes exchange possible by creating connections between otherwise incommensurable entities (Brown, 2012: 13-16).

System theorists (e.g. Baecker, 2003) have used this term to indicate systems whose major task is how to annul the declared (legal) function of any other social system with which it communicates, and to transform its goals and outcomes in a similar way. If we consider the legal system an external environment of illegal migration (in addition to the economy, public administration, politics, culture, education, etc.), then the parasite⁶ influences their regular function and structures for the fulfilment of its own purposes (Serres, 1980/2009). As a result, all the subsystems that support illegal immigration in one way or another do nothing more than perpetrate the flow of immigrants and the underground economy surrounding it. Comparing an organized criminal group to an ‘enterprise’ or ‘firm’

⁵ I do not know of any reliable study on the financial outcomes and social consequences of illegal immigration for Greece.

⁶ Michel Serres (1980/2009) developed a communication theory on the basis of cybernetic approaches and the information model of Claude E. Shannon. Serres puts the messenger (joker) at the centre of his theory. This messenger is described in his work ‘The Passenger’ in part as a parasite and sometimes as a wildcard in relation to communication. In sociological systems theory, Niklas Luhmann, Maren Lehmann, Dirk Baecker, Peter Fuchs and Bruno Latour have transferred and applied his approach.

and its key personnel to ‘entrepreneurs’ was a significant step to viewing its illegal activities as a business process (Fijnaut et al., 1998; Reuter, 1985). Yet it was not until the early 1990s that criminologists began to study the logistics of specific illegal activities. It would also be useful to examine illegal markets as parasitic to the legal economy. Recently, there have been studies in economic sociology examining illegal markets operating parasitically on or symbiotically with legal markets, and the issue of how the parasite makes a profit for the illegal markets from the value construction of legal markets (Wehinger, 2011).

4.3 Methods Used in Empirical Research

In general, according to Klaus von Lampe (2012), three means of data collection have been used for the study of transnational organized crime and the illegal markets relating to it: observations, interviews and the retrieval of information stored electronically or on paper. Sometimes, different types of data sources are combined in the same research project. Participant observations have been rare and risky. An increasing number of studies rely on interviews with offenders, both those in prison and those in the community (von Lampe, 2012: 181-182, 185-186). There are difficulties with these means of data collection: studies can lack detail regarding the modus operandi of offenders, the logistics of transnational criminal activities and the nature of groups’ structures in the sense of forms of cooperation (e.g. market transactions between independent actors, network cooperation) (von Lampe, 2012: 183). In addition, only one area is usually examined (e.g. the destination country of trafficking), while the nature of activities and groups in source and transit countries is usually speculation (*cf.* Reyneri, 2001, 2003).

Another difficulty is differential access for researchers to data sources/owners and the willingness of governments, justice authorities, law enforcement authorities, NGOs and the private sector, etc. to cooperate with the researchers. Likewise, the range and quality of data collected and processed by law enforcement agencies, local or governmental authorities and private organizations (e.g. commercial associations/unions) are very different to those used/needed by researchers.

The sources used for the present research include police, media and international organizations’ reports (Europol, Frontex, World Bank, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], US Department of State), Parliamentary proceedings, sessional proceedings of the Athens city council and of the council for the integration of immigrants, information provided and data submitted by local authorities, and data from national strategic analysts.

Field research was conducted from November 2010. The methods used were interviews with representatives of local government, the Coast Guard, financial and economic crime unit representatives, police officers and numerous city residents and entrepreneurs. From January 2011, systematic observation and participation in community and town councils was carried out whenever relevant topics were on the agendas of local council meetings (usually every two weeks). Interviews with immigrants (shop owners, customers, people hanging around) were rare and serendipitous, owing to their unwillingness and suspiciousness and the personal safety of the researcher.

4.4 Results: Immigration Inc.

4.4.1 Accommodation and Work

Since 2007 a large wave of unskilled illegal immigrants from Asia and Africa, dissimilar to that in the 1990s from the former communist Balkan countries, has entered Greece. The majority settled in Athens and other big cities. These people, chiefly working-age males, have entered a city with no available jobs to offer, a situation that has degenerated even further due to the ongoing debt crisis.

It can be claimed that undeclared immigrant workers are employed in ‘dirty, difficult and dangerous’ (‘3-D jobs’), as well as such poor social status jobs constituting the lowest rank of the underground economy, below the level accepted by indigenous workers, even those who are willing to work without a contract of employment (Reyneri, 2003: 8). It is also argued that in Southern Europe the underground economy is divided into ‘good’ and ‘bad’ jobs and that local workers, especially young people, are able to avoid the ‘bad’ ones and to get the ‘good’ ones. However, considering the current economic situation in Greece, even these ‘3-D jobs’ have become less and less available, as the unemployment statistics show. The unemployment rate among immigrants with legal residence is higher than among indigenous people (32.5%-22.7%; National Statistical Service of Greece [NSSG]/ELSTAT, 2012b: 3).

According to the Athenian municipal authorities, there are approximately 150 large and deteriorating buildings in the centre of Athens, where thousands of undocumented immigrants live in a yearly rotation, where they pay organized criminals €2-5 per day for ‘rent’ (Hellenic Police, GDA, 12 November 2010, 27 April 2012, 29 April 2012). Authorities say that the leaders of these syndicates have actually bought the buildings and can thus provide shelter for those whom they have trafficked into the country. In this way, these syndicates acquire considerable illegal funds (Michaletos, 2011c).⁷

The number of so-called ‘slumlords’ is growing in the Athens central areas, and since the areas are being used by smugglers to shelter illegal immigrants, the native inhabitants have abandoned the area and either rent or sell their property at very low prices to these criminal networks, usually represented by real estate agencies. Low property prices facilitate the purchase of more such properties by these investors, ordinarily with little or no down payment.

These ‘slumlords’ do the minimum to maintain the living standards of their property, and in turn offer low rental rates to tenants who will not (or cannot) pay higher rates, and/or who might not have the legal documents required to live in the higher rent areas. The new owners receive rent in cash, gathering a large amount of money over a short period of time. Apart from these profits, they acquire high earnings from using immigrants to sell narcotics and other products as illegal street vendors, from prostituting them or finding them temporary manual labour, one example being occasionally aggressive panhandling by cleaning car windows or selling sundries at traffic lights, while charging the immigrants a commission on their ‘sales’.

⁷ It is said, with no further details, however, that a simple calculation shows that the human trafficking networks, mostly run by Albanians, Afghans, Egyptians, Greeks, Nigerians, Syrians and others, make from €200,000 to €500,000 per day as ‘slumlords’.

The Greek National Intelligence Service produced a report in early 2011 that was leaked to a daily newspaper (Ethnos, 2011b), in which it stated that crime syndicates have been able to create pro-immigrant NGOs (*cf.* Harokopeio University, 2009),⁸ buy real estate and create ‘zones of influence’ within Athens, so as to construct their ghettos and evade police surveillance. In addition, the intelligence report noted that organized criminal groups have made the necessary ‘investments’ by buying influence in certain sectors of public opinion, so as to neutralize opposition in many cases.

Furthermore, among the Wikileaks US diplomatic cables revelations (Crethi Plethi.Com, 2011; *The Guardian*, 2011; Karanikas, 2011), it was noted that a former American ambassador in Athens had held talks with Greek officials (the Minister of Citizen Protection and the Chief of the National Police), pointing out the existence of certain ethnic networks that smuggle immigrants into the country, and that are believed to be related to radical Islamist groups in Southeast Asia (*see* Michaletos, 2011b, 2011d).

A detailed newspaper report in 2010 (*Kathimerini*, 2010) also stated that the number of unofficial mosques⁹ operating in Greece (excluding Thrace, where native Muslim populations live) is also increasing. Police estimate the current number of ‘illegal’ mosques operating in Greece as approximately 85, usually set up in private apartments, basement shops and warehouses/storage areas (*see also* Kern, 2011b). However, the president of the Muslim Association of Greece, N.E., participating in a television broadcast on 9 February 2012,¹⁰ referred to approximately 100 mosques operating just in Athens. The same newspaper underlines that the number of Muslim extremists reaching Greece through illegal immigration channels is also increasing and that dozens of ‘under-the-table’ money transfer facilities exist. These, it states, are usually owned by immigrants from Muslim countries and facilitate substantial money laundering operations in Greece.

4.4.2 Contraband Goods and Travel Documents

A special task force created by the Greek tax service uncovered seven illegal warehouses between October 2010 and March 2011 (Michaletos, 2011a). Stored within these facilities were illegally traded goods, such as clothing, bags and furniture, with a value of over €30 million. Illegal trade undercuts the turnover of legal merchants and shop owners that sell clothing, leather goods and travel accessories, thus contributing to the continuation of adverse economic conditions for the legitimate economy.

The majority of the trade in contraband goods is controlled by specific ethnic groups with logistic support provided mainly by Greeks. The turnover of the illegal trade is estimated to be between €7 and €10 billion annually, and results in a loss of about €4 billion in state income (Parliamentary Proceedings, 2011). The president of the Athens Chamber of

⁸ Over 40 NGOs and associations (13.5%) have been counted operating in the geographic area of our research, mostly by immigrant groups, which along with Greek ones offer training, medical care, psychosocial support, etc. to immigrants. 296 (79%) such pro-immigrant NGOs operate in the prefecture of Athens, from a total of 375 in the whole country (Harokopeio University, 2009).

⁹ According to Greek legislation, certain prerequisites need to be fulfilled in order for a place to operate as a centre for religious activities (*e.g.* it cannot be a basement, the fabric of the property cannot be changed without the permission of the town planning service or cannot be changed at all for safety reasons, and a hygiene licence is required etc.).

¹⁰ Dimarcheio, 9 February 2012, Kontra channel.

Commerce and Industry (ACCI) estimates the annual losses to state revenues to be a minimum of €6 billion, while the impact on legitimate businesses is €25 billion due to the loss of market turnover, significantly higher than the figures referred to in Parliamentary proceedings (ACCI, 2012).

According to police sources, press publications and anecdotal evidence from citizens during our research, there is also a widespread forgery industry for travel documents, with most networks originating from two specific Asian communities. During a raid in February 2011, the Greek Special Forces recovered around 500 fake travel documents and stolen official stamps belonging to such groups; several raids followed with similar results (e.g. Hellenic Police, GDA, 13 April 2012, 26 April 2012, 19 May 2012).

Forgery of official documents is of vital concern for police and counter-terrorism authorities, since the groups often need multiple sources of false identification to travel internationally and successfully evade governments that may have blacklisted them. With the ongoing crises in North Africa and the Middle East exacerbating an exodus of refugees fleeing to Europe, the trade in fraudulent or doctored papers represents a major 'growth industry' for criminal groups involved in migrant smuggling in Greece today (Frontex, 2012a: 18, 42). Even if forged documents have nothing to do with facilitating terrorist activities, this option cannot be excluded. A recent *Sunday Times* investigation by undercover journalists found that criminal gangs in Athens were renting genuine passports and identity documents to thousands of illegal immigrants, enabling them to enter EU countries undetected. The gang charged immigrants €1,000 to hire the identity documents, which they used to pass through border controls (Mahmood, 2012).

In its 2009 report on terrorism, the US State Department expressed its concern that Greece could be used as a transit route for terrorists travelling to Europe and the United States, because the country is increasingly an EU entry point for illegal immigrants coming from the Middle East and South Asia (US Department of State, 2010). In order to counter radicalization and violent extremism, police officials met with representatives of the different immigrant communities to discuss ways to address discrimination and incidents of police abuse (US Department of State, 2011). Additionally, in 2011, the local government of the city of Athens and the municipality of the Piraeus prefecture established a council to facilitate immigrant integration, which is intended to help foster dialogue on issues such as discrimination, social benefits for immigrants, legalization, employment and security (Law 3852/2010).

Municipalities all over Greece now have similar 'immigrants' integration councils', the memberships of which have over two-thirds drawn from immigrants' representatives. For the time being the role of the council in the city of Athens is to promote the economic and political benefits of the immigrant communities rather than their integration (*cf.* Khan et al., 2007).

4.4.3 'Legal' Enterprises and Legitimate Business

Today, an area of the city centre of Athens seems to be in the process of being divided into 'sectors of influence' (Chart 4.1) by several criminal groups, while two out of seven

Athenian communities are largely controlled by organized crime (as mentioned above).¹¹ Next to the centre a radius of approximately 2 km of previously bourgeois quarters has been gradually ‘colonized’ by ‘legal’-illegal immigrant groups with the support of locals and, in particular, real estate companies and proprietors. In particular, since 2009, there has been an apparent increase in Asian presence and entrepreneurship in Athens city centre and the surrounding communities (Brettell, 1999). The majority operate internet and call shops, shops with cell phones and accessories, electronic devices and money transfer (usually all together), mini markets and barber shops.

Moreover, people of African origin are mostly vendors of illegal items originating from China (bags, glasses, umbrellas, etc.). In addition, they participate in drug trafficking, in the inner city and in the area of our research. Africans also operate a large number of bars, while African women’s beauty and hairdresser’s shops can also be fronts for illegal prostitution and drug smuggling, according to the local inhabitants and business owners.

The operations of several of these groups’ daily activities in the public squares and parks have ‘pushed’ the native inhabitants back into their houses and apartments, which has given free rein to the criminal gangs in these areas. Furthermore, as mentioned above, the number of Greek residents in these areas of Athens is dwindling more and more. According to the National Statistical Office, 133,386 permanent inhabitants – also known as ‘usual residents’ – have left Athens (the municipality of Athens) during the last 10 years (2001-2011) (NSSG/ELSTAT, 2011). Over the last few years, with successive Greek governments ignoring the issue, throngs of such undocumented, desperate and increasingly hostile immigrants have been active in the centre of Athens (Research Institute for European and American studies [RIEAS], 2011). Remarkably, this deteriorating situation has occurred relatively quickly – over the past four years – with a substantial influx of undocumented immigrants, mostly from the Middle East, Southeast Asia and Africa. Government and local schemes were set up in summer 2010 to work together on an action plan to revamp the centre of Athens, as residents and business owners intensified their complaints about the impact that crime and illegal immigration were having on the area (Athens Plus, 2010). Unfortunately the situation has not changed much.

From Figure 4.1 we see that, from the research results,

- 13.5% ($n = 28$) of the 207 shops and enterprises (Stand: April 2012) operated by third-country nationals and created during the last two-and-a-half years were bars and pubs,
- 29.4% ($n = 61$) internet and call shops ($n1 = 46/22.2\%$) or selling cell phones and accessories, electronic devices and money transfer shops ($n2 = 15/7.2\%$) – mostly all together,
- 22.7% mini markets ($n = 47$),
- 14.5% ($n = 30$) barber shops, hair salons and beauty parlours,
- 7.7% ($n = 16$) selling clothing, bags, shoes – contraband goods,

¹¹ This is more or less the situation in the area depicted in Chart 4.1, which is part of the first Athens community. The second research area on Chart 4.2 is part of the sixth Athens community.

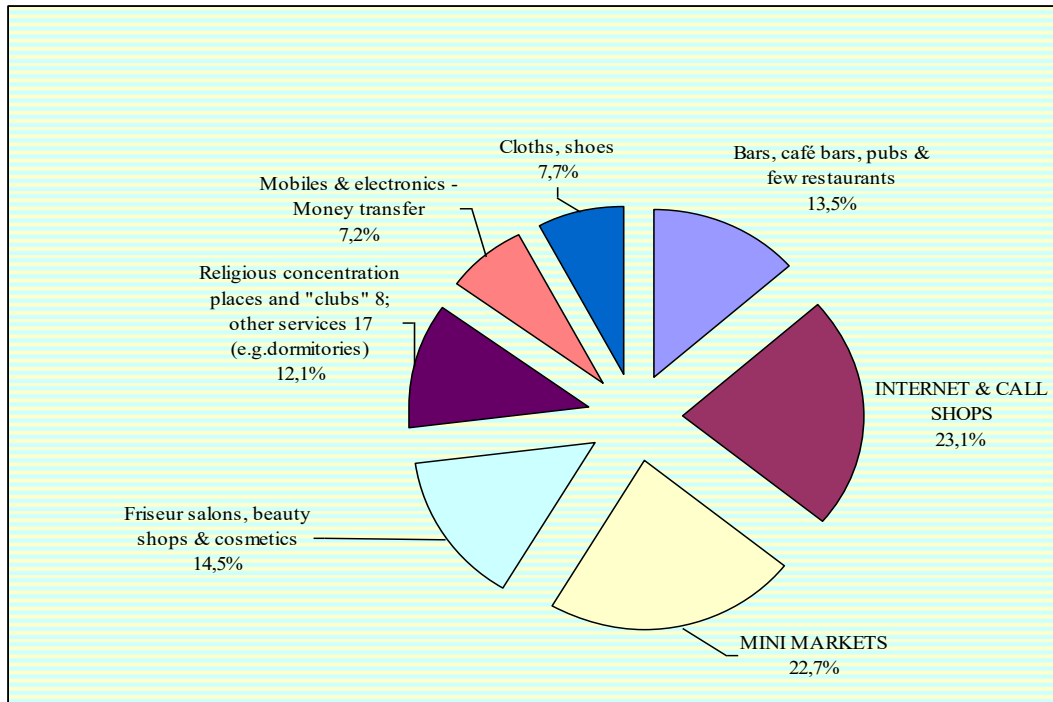
- while 12.1% ($n = 25$) were religious centres, clubs and associations ($n1 = 8/32\%$), as well as various services ($n2 = 17/68\%$), such as providing translation, typewriting, legal aid/lawyers, a nursery school, dormitories and brothels.

Figure 4.1 KI.PO.KA. Crime Chart 2010 – Part of City centre



Source: KI.PO.KA. 2010

Figure 4.2 Shops and enterprises of third-country nationals in an Athenian community (2011-12)



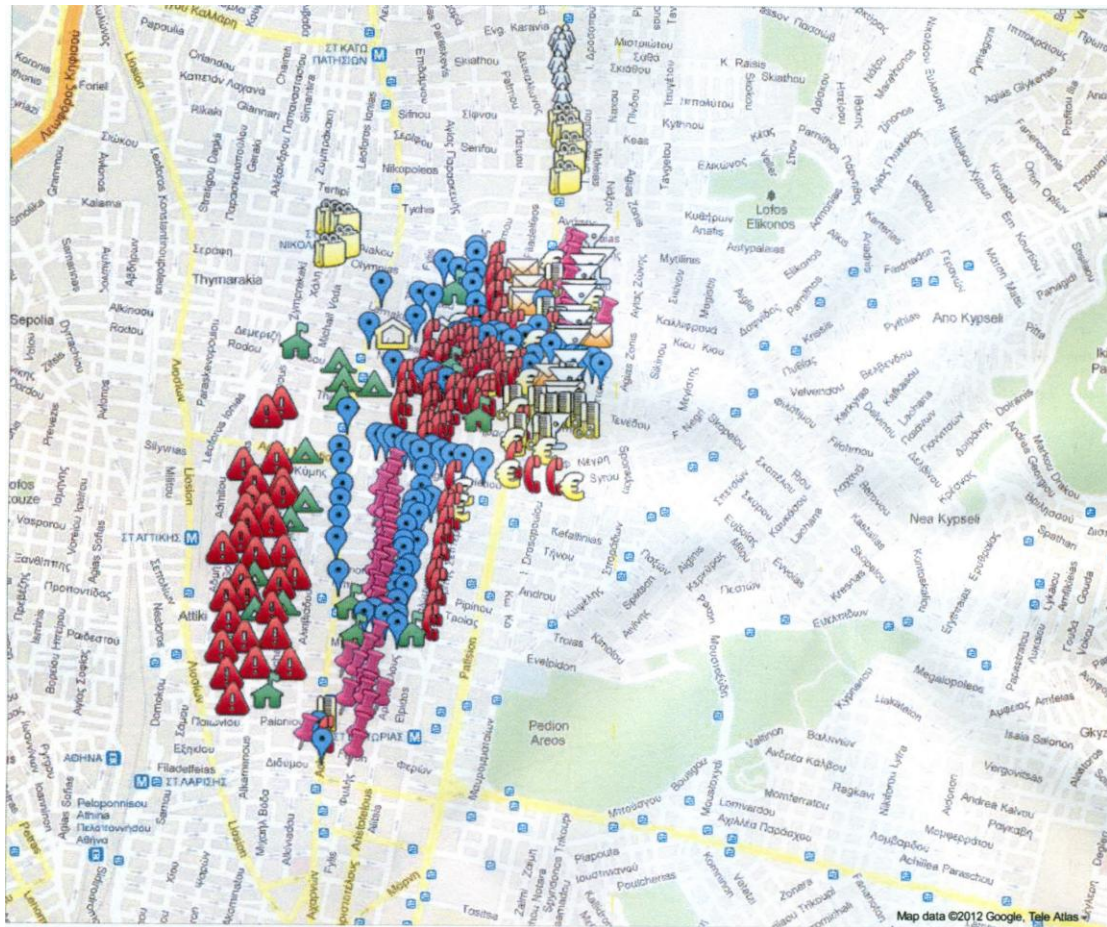
The rate of foreigners' shops in the area corresponds to 28.3%-33.3% of business activity; over 22.5% ($n = 140$) of the total number of Greek shops ($n = 621$) had closed between May 2011 and May 2012, so that less than 500 were operating in December 2011.

Although in some roads certain enterprises are over-represented in relation to the rest, there is not a significant geographic division of labour regarding the goods and services on offer. Anyway, the rising number and density of internet shops and mini markets cannot be justified by demand and apparent profits. For example, in a span of 50 m three such shops were operating (while a few metres further down, three mini markets were located all in a row), while the communication costs in the call centres via Skype, etc. is €0.50 per hour.

From the observations, I can verify that many immigrants had laptops, and all had at least one mobile, while squares of the region had free wireless internet access provided by the municipality or privately by 'independent' persons, mostly entrepreneurs.¹²

¹² See <www.athenswifi.gr/>, <<http://free-wifi.gr/en/the-community>>.

Figure 4.3 Density of enterprises of third country nationals–part of an Athenian precinct next to the city centre (2011-12) (Roadmap)



Legend

	Mini Market		Mosque or African Church		Street prostitution
	Red light		Dormitories		Money transfer & mobiles
	Bars and girls		Barber shops, hair salons (& beauty shops)		Internet shops, mobiles (money transfer)
	Drug smuggling		Clubs & associations		Contraband
	'No-Go' Area evenings & nights				

Furthermore, the law requires documentary proof of at least €60,000 in a bank account for an applicant originating from a developing country to start a new enterprise (Law 3386/2005, Article 24[4a]). This raises the question of where those operating businesses had obtained, if it was theirs, such money to open a bank account, since the majority had spent a maximum of two to three years in the country and are largely considered 'poor refugees'. However, according to a study by Emilio Reyneri (2001, 2003: 3) a decade ago, 'those who emigrate are not the poorest people from these countries, but rather those who are at a relative disadvantage, but possess the material and cultural

resources to face the costs and hardships presented by emigration'.¹³ In addition, the image of the country of destination is also very important for intending immigrants who must decide whether overcoming the obstacles and successfully negotiating the intended country's immigration policy make the journey worthwhile. In order to overcome obstacles, immigrants must have considerable economic and personal resources and be prepared for high costs, such as smugglers' fees or obtaining forged documents, as well as undergoing numerous risks. Therefore, they have calculated the eventual benefits of immigration, such as economic, cultural and existential, in the recipient country to be greater than the dangers and costs they will have endured (Reyneri, 2003: 4-5). Whether this applies to Greece cannot be answered here; there are some indications in support of this argument, and some which are against it, such as the obvious daily activities of new immigrants (see below). In any case, the claims of Reyneri should be taken into account.

The image of Greece as a country where it is easy to live and work in the underground economy, and the possibility of acquiring legal status due to frequent regularization/amnesty schemes, has endured for two decades (Baldwin-Edwards and Kraler, 2009). Moreover, it is known that controls by police were infrequent and, even when unauthorized immigrants were arrested; they were sporadically deported, making the whole immigration venture worthwhile.

Organized criminal activities in legal markets extend also to direct investment in and management of legitimate businesses. Anderson (1982) notes that the main reasons for organized crime to start legitimate business activities are: first, members of criminal organizations need a source of legitimate income to hide their actual business. Similarly, in the supply of illegal goods or services there is a need for places to trade, so that small shops, bars and restaurants are used to cover activities related to loan-sharking, gambling, etc. (Hellenic Police, GDA, 15 January 2012). Secondly, illegal activities often produce outputs or use resources that are also needed in legal enterprises (transportation, communications, warehousing), so that it is profitable to integrate the two. Thirdly, organized crime needs to launder at least part of its profits. To do so through a business activity under its control reduces the risks involved in money laundering. Fourthly, the legitimate business can be seen as an occasion to diversify the organization's business with investments characterized by a different mix of risk and returns (Fiorentini, 2001: 448).

In order to operate an internet shop, as well as a mini market, beauty shops, hair salons, cafés, bars, pastry shops, bakeries, etc., several conditions must be met – toilet facilities, fire exits, etc. The community authorities need to provide pre-registration documents after the owners have submitted certain control certificates that have been carried out by other services, *i.e.*, town planning, the fire department and the hygiene inspectorate. However, during our research we noticed that the pre-registration of the shops of third-country nationals was formal and swift, restricted to examination of the necessary documents, while for others, mainly Greek nationals, it was very detailed and strict. Apart from this, the local authorities often accepted partial submission of papers, did not close down shops operating without registration, even a year or more before an application, or when they were repeatedly in violation of the law, despite giving them ample opportunity to conform.

¹³ Emigration and immigration are not the same; however, the author intentionally utilizes the first term because he claims that most new 'migrants are not poor people "escaping to survive"' but they are 'from countries with an intermediate level of development, who are at a disadvantage, but not completely poverty-stricken' (Reyneri, 2003: 2-3).

All in all, the state organs and local authorities show high tolerance of the illegal practices of immigrants, unless the municipal police lodge a complaint against the operation of the shop or Greek shop owners, residents' unions, or other persons object to the licence or operations using the legal means available. Such objections were not usual until the beginning of 2011, when opposition from local residents became more organized. Foreign entrepreneurs were seen to use several forms of business conduct as a cover for their entrepreneurial activities that would bypass following proper protocols, in order for their operation to start immediately.¹⁴

The shop manager was not always the owner, but the front man, a 'straw man'. The shops occasionally had mobile phone numbers, allowing the purported owner or the contact person to be anywhere in the country or beyond. They also used local phone numbers from other Athenian neighbourhoods, indicating that the enterprise was coordinated from another region or, more probably, that the shop cannot have a local number. This happened when the applicant did not have appropriate documents (*e.g.* bills, identity cards, etc.), or had unpaid charges to public or local services. From the municipality of Athens (Division of Shops and Performances and the Quality of Life Committee) and the Hygiene Inspectorate of the Attica region we found that several enterprises of the same kind operated under the same name, for example: internet shops, beauty shops, hair salons and bars. Of the 207 shops operated by third-country nationals, 25 (12%) shops in the community under examination were owned by eleven entrepreneurs; of these, one person seemed to have four shops (three in the local community and one in the neighbouring one).

In such shops money transfers were carried out either by appropriate companies (Western Union, Money Gram, etc.) or informally, hand to hand, but mostly electronically. In the community during the research period, at least two owners of these shops defrauded their clients and disappeared. In an interview with a Coast Guard officer regarding illegal immigration, he referred to an informal value transfer system (IVTS) in such shops, known as *hawala*, which supports the financing of further immigration. Other reports also indicated that the *hawala* money transfer system is widely used by Muslim immigrant communities in Greece (Michaletos, 2011a).

Hawala (also known as *hundi* and *undiya*) is based on the performance and honour of a huge network of money brokers, who are primarily located in the Middle East, North Africa, the Horn of Africa and South Asia. It has a major advantage for customers with tax, currency control, immigration or other concerns, because the transfers are usually informal and not effectively regulated by governments (Azad, 2011). Following Indian and Pakistani usage, *hawala* can be distinguished between white and black forms. 'White *hawala*' is used to refer to legitimate (source and intent) transactions, while 'black' refers to illegitimate transactions, specifically *hawala* money laundering (*cf.* Passas, 2004). In investigating *hawala* money laundering, it has been found that even 'basic' *hawala* transfers can be difficult to trace back to the original criminal source of the transaction, since *hawala* transfers leave a thin or confusing paper trail if any (Jost and Singh Sandhu, 2003).

An example of how this mechanism could work is the following: a Pakistani worker in Greece wants to send money to his family in Pakistan. To do this he will establish contact with a broker, who will arrange the transfer. The worker pays in euros, dollars or other convertible currencies. The broker in Greece contacts his/her colleague in Pakistan, who

¹⁴ *E.g.* by adding electronic devices and mobile phones, clothing, etc., to the shop, which have no special prerequisites. Thus, at the front mobiles and other items, such as blankets, suitcases, etc. will be sold, while at the back shops would have PCs for internet use, as well as phone booths.

pays the money to the family of the worker in local currency. Notably, in this case, money has never crossed the border. The transaction is based on communication and trust between the intermediaries, which guarantee the debt and keep the whole system working. Given hawala's close ties to business activities, there is no reason why money cannot be 'reinvested' in a legitimate (or seemingly legitimate) business. The broker in Greece could very easily arrange for the transfer of money from Greece to Pakistan, and then back to Greece, apparently as part of an investment in a business there, and from Greece to the UK, France, Spain, etc.

Hawala is not the only method for money transfer; a wide range of methods and networks operate in similar ways and offer comparable services (*e.g.* charities, internet-based payments/transfers of stored value, such as pre-paid telephone cards, debit and credit cards used by multiple individual brokerage accounts; *see* Passas, 2005). Other communities, such as eastern Europeans, tend to make greater use of hand-carrying of cash or in kind – by themselves or by a trusted relative or friend – or courier services. Similarly, Albanian immigrants in Greece, according to older research (Korovilas, 1999: 404-405), preferred to accumulate a large sum of money while working in the country and to take it with them when they returned to Albania, rather than entrust the funds to someone else; however, sometimes, they would trust a friend or relative to take the funds back home (*see also* Blackwell and Seddon, 2004: 13).

According to the World Bank's data (2010, 2015) the registered outflow to their home countries by immigrant households in Greece in 2008 was US\$1,912 billion, in 2009 US\$1,843 billion, in 2010 US\$1,932 billion, reported as €1,45 billion in the Greek Press (*Adesmeytos Typos*, 2010; *Demokratia*, 2011; *Epikaira*, 2010), in 2011 US\$1,941 billion, and in 2012 US\$1,438 (World Bank 13/4/2015). In terms of destinations, Albania's share in the outflow was the highest with US\$599 million for 2010 (*see also* World Bank 2011: 125, 2015); other countries with high shares were Poland, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Romania, Pakistan, China and India (World Bank, 2010: Tables 3, 4¹⁵; *see also* Ratha and Shaw, 2007). The undocumented transfers are not captured in any national or international database, and it is regarded to be much higher.

Research in the United Kingdom has also shown that informal value transfer systems have proven very attractive, particularly to migrant workers and their families who are heavily involved in sending and receiving remittances (Blackwell and Seddon, 2004: 11). However, there are indications that after 2000 they have become less attractive and the flow of funds through these systems has tended to decline in relation to the overall flow of remittances – which appears to be increasing (Blackwell and Seddon, 2004: 11). A small survey of the African diaspora carried out in the UK suggests that only 35% of Africans sent money back home via banks (5%) or international money transfer systems (30%), while the rest use cash or other methods (Blackwell and Seddon, 2004: 13). According to the literature, hawala and hundi systems work for certain ethnic groups, such as Pakistanis, while other people, for example Afghans, are quite suspicious of them. Thus, it is clear that the trust that remitters and receivers have in the informal transfer may only apply where the IVTS is an established system with experienced players. The report concludes that the informal transfer system is constantly changing, and transfers via IVTS are only part of a much larger, international and informal flow of funds (Blackwell and Seddon, 2004: 23).

¹⁵ Bilateral Migration Matrix 'Bilateral remittance estimates using migrant stocks, destination country incomes, and source country incomes'.

The issue is how these informal transfers and alternative systems can be prevented from being abused by criminals or terrorist organizations for their funding and those who wish to launder money, *e.g.* from drug trafficking and alien smuggling (Work Group KE.M.ME.S and IDIS, 2006; *see also* Passas, 2003). There is increasing pressure, both in origin and in recipient countries, to regulate more rigorously, and even to criminalize, the informal transfers (*cf.* Bronskill, 2005). India, Pakistan and Bangladesh have all outlawed the hawala and hundi systems, but in Pakistan and Bangladesh they have not been able to implement the law, although there are indications that law enforcement is being tightened up (Blackwell and Seddon, 2004: 19). The flow of illegal migration into Greece, the forged documents used and the absence of records makes it difficult for the authorities to deal with the unreported incomes of these groups and the ‘underground’ economy.

In sum, a part of Athens’ city centre, traditionally inhabited until the late 1980s by the upper middle class, declined in the nineties so that it seems now rapidly to be developing into a no-go area for citizens, especially visitors. The interactions between illegal businesses are growing, and the area is systematically becoming materially and economically controlled by them, trading in food, clothing and apparel, beauty services, communications and religious activities, in practice expelling the previous locals and their businesses in the process. Moreover, several NGOs and other state organizations offer diverse forms of support to those living there and recently arrived immigrants in the neighbourhoods, such as health and hygiene, food, etc., attracting immigrants from other regions of the city; thus the living conditions of the original residents are aggravated. In the meantime the drug problem is escalating and attracting more people, prostitution is endemic, public spaces are deteriorating, lawlessness is widespread, and soon, the situation will become difficult to control, unless the state and local governments decide to intervene effectively, since the government’s 2010 action plan and local schemes to revive the centre of Athens do not appear to have had any effect.

4.5 Neighbourhood Change Models and Disorganization

Research, mainly by American researchers, has shown that the degradation and disorganization of an urban area in architectural and aesthetic appearance is not an isolated negative situation, but has implications for the wider social fabric, feeding lawlessness and crime. The broken windows theory of James Wilson and George Kelling (1982) suggested, 30 years ago, that signs of disorderly and petty criminal behaviour might trigger more disorder and petty criminal activity, thus causing the behaviour to spread and escalate into more serious crime. This may cause neighbourhoods to decay and the quality of life of its inhabitants to deteriorate.

Urban disorganization as a consequence of aesthetic degradation can be categorized into physical and social disorder. Physical disorder in urban space is associated with qualitative morphological features, building preservation and social infrastructure in a given urban space. Social disorder is expressed by antisocial behaviour and delinquency (begging, prostitution, illegal trade and trading of contraband goods, etc.) in an area, which may cause further deterioration. Timely control prevents aggravation of the intensity and extent of the problem. In contrast, the weakening of law enforcement and social control increases delinquency and leads to law-abiding citizens abandoning the area. Thus, crime and delinquency become consolidated in the area (Kirk and Laub, 2010).

The appropriate environmental design, which takes into account morphological and qualitative characteristics of the urban area, may lead to a significant reduction in crime and anomie. Research at the Universities of Harvard and Suffolk in the USA in 2005 (Braga and Bond, 2008; *The Boston Globe*, 2009a, 2009b) as well as at the University of Groningen in The Netherlands in 2008 (Keizer et al., 2008) found that the most effective measure to control crime in urban areas is the restoration of social order and the aesthetic improvement of the environment.

Of particular importance is a plan of small-scale specific and measurable goals, such as limiting physical disorder (graffiti, litter, damage) in public space and controlling delinquency and antisocial behaviour. Order and care in public places supports law-abiding social behaviour. Monitoring selected points in public space through the control of antisocial behaviour protects citizens and redresses order. An example is the underground metro in Athens (Kotoulas, 2012).

Neighbourhood change and decline has been an issue in urban sociology and human ecology since the beginning of the 20th century. Although the topic of this chapter is not the analysis of neighbourhood change, it would be helpful to outline broken windows and social disorganization theory (Fagan, 2008), while having in mind the two areas of the present study.

Two classic models have been proposed by the studies on neighbourhood change (Schwirian, 1983). The first model (from the Chicago School, e.g. Park, 1968: 223-254), known as the 'invasion-succession' model, was used to describe the processes of alteration in neighbourhood population that in turn change land use and the commercial structure or dominant activities of the neighbourhood (Schmidt and Lee, 1978). For example, a few immigrants who are content with tenement style dwelling begin to populate – by themselves or supported by real estate companies and proprietors – a neighbourhood to the chagrin of the original residents, who eventually leave. Succession is the end of the process, when the area has changed completely from its former character (Schwirian, 1983: 89-91, with extensive bibliography).

In the second neighbourhood life-cycle model (Hoover and Vernon, 1962), many areas of the city unavoidably undergo a process of life-cycle change that involves five stages: development, transition, downgrading, thinning out and renewal. As the neighbourhood passes from one stage to the next, several elements change, such as the residents' status, ethnicity, age, composition of the population, the intensity of land and dwelling use, population density and the quality and condition of housing (Schwirian, 1983: 91-92).

Within the framework of the above models several theoretical orientations have evolved (London, 1980; London et al., 1980): the demographic/ecological orientation, the sociocultural/organizational perspective, the political-economic perspective and the social movements' model (Schwirian, 1983: 92-97). The demographic/ecological perspective focuses on the adaptation of the population to its environment (Hawley, 1950). The key demographic element making for neighbourhood population change is migration. A major interest in human ecology is the extent to which neighbourhoods maintain their social organization under continued population turnover. The sociocultural/organizational perspective deals both with the attitudes and values of the population and with the forms of social relations that evolve within the neighbourhood context (Shaw and McKay, 1969; Suttles, 1973, 1974).

The emergence of a political economy perspective is one of the more interesting trends in modern neighbourhood analysis. The political economy approach views community change in terms of the complex linkages among economic and political institutions and the various segments of the business and housing markets. According to this approach, the city's growth is guided by a set of affluent land interests. These interests operate through inter-organizational connections in such a way that there is an uneven distribution across the city of the benefits of development and revitalization. The winners are always the wealthy (Schwirian, 1983: 95). Research has been carried out on the ways institutions operate to control the urban land market. The political economy orientation places neighbourhood change in the broader perspective of change in the total urban system. For example, Downs (1981) argues that the fate of any neighbourhood is not determined by neighbourhood councils or individual actors, but by economic, political and social forces outside its boundaries. The options for neighbourhood response are limited.

Finally, according to the social-movements approach, social movements frequently develop over specific issues of resource allocation (London, 1980; London et al., 1980). The members of the movement develop ideologies and leadership, formulate strategies to attain goals, and compete with other groups for resources. The model emphasizes citizens' participation in neighbourhood transformation.

Several elements of these perspectives seem to apply to our cases, but a focused research is necessary. From my peripheral view the most relevant seems to be the invasion-succession model along with the social ecological and the political economy perspective.

Concerning ghettoization and neighbourhood decay, the question of what the Greek authorities have learned from comparable situations in other European countries with high rates of Asian and Middle Eastern populations remains unanswered. Contemporary integration policies emphasize social-cultural assimilation of migrants as opposed to multiculturalism, which was an earlier policy (Smets, 2011). In Athens, it is interesting to note that a growing deliberate segregation is obvious, which the policies of the local government are facilitating, rather than preventing.

Despite a sizeable number of Muslims in Western Europe (*e.g.* France, Germany), who are successful in business and academia, an increasing number are likely to live in areas with Muslim-specific religious and cultural practices, being still poorly integrated into society. Even if these preferences are driven by a sense of alienation, grievance and injustice, this is not yet the case in Greece – at least, because of their short stay in the country.

Fears of a possible major demographic shift towards Islam as well as ongoing Muslim assimilation problems highlight the continuing divide (Kurth, 2006; Lebl, 2013). How is Greece to deal with the continuous influx of illegal immigrants? Is the tolerance of the authorities towards deviant practices and various, sometimes unacceptable and unreasonable demands a way forward for the integration of this population with local inhabitants, or facilitation instead of the establishment of ghettos vulnerable to be governed by radicals (*Reuters*, 2011; *see also* Banoutsos, 2011; Casciani, 2011; Giannoulis, 2011; Kern, 2011a) and reinforcement of us/them configurations?

4.6 Discussion

4.6.1 Illegal Migration and Immigration 'Policy'

As mentioned above, after the fall of the communist regimes in 1989, a mass influx of illegal immigrants into Greece took place, mostly from the neighbouring Balkan countries. The government at the time (1990-1993) was not prepared to tackle the situation and, despite attempting some deportations, it reluctantly tolerated this wave of immigrants. With the immigrant population steadily increasing and an illegal market for cheap labour having been created, the following governments in power (1993-2004) decided to act.

Thus, in 1997 (PDs 357 and 358) and 2001 (Law 2910), they offered an opportunity for regularization to all undocumented immigrants, while more and more immigrants continued to enter the country illegally. The 'policy' of successive opportunities for regularization was repeated in 2005 (Law 3386) and 2007 (Law 3613, Article 28; Law 3731/2008, Articles 37-41, 45) by subsequent governments, despite revelations that falsified documents were commonly used for illegal naturalization of foreign nationals (Lambropoulou et al., 2008: 10-13, 21-22) and the increasing crime rates.

Up to 2007 about 60% of the regularized immigrants were from neighbouring Albania, followed by 5% from Bulgaria and the rest from the former Soviet republics (RIEAS, 2011; *see also* Baldwin-Edwards and Apostolatos, 2009). After 2007 the situation deteriorated. New waves of immigrants had entered the country from Africa and Asia, and their numbers continued to rise. They entered Greece either through its eastern sea and land borders with Turkey or they crossed the Mediterranean Sea in small boats (usually from Egypt). At the end of 2006, Greece introduced special procedures to clear the backlog of asylum seekers waiting to register claims. As a consequence, the number of applicants registered rose sharply in 2007, making Greece the sixth highest recipient country during that year (25,100 claimants) and the second in Europe after Sweden per capita (UNHCR, 2008: 12, Table 1; *cf.* UNHCR, 2011: 9, Table 2, 2012: 18, Table 1).

Despite the failure of the 'revolving door practice' of regularization to control the hordes of illegal immigrants, the last PASOK government was still preparing a fifth round after coming to power in October 2009 (*see also* Delithanassi, 2009). This was not fulfilled until December 2011, when it was replaced by the unity government, which oversaw the management of the debt crisis. Meanwhile, several presidential and ministerial decrees and circulars have been issued by all governments in power, facilitating residence and work permit requirements for illegal newcomers¹⁶ (*see also* European Migration Network, 2012).

Greece has found itself at the sharp end of Europe's illegal immigration problem largely because other countries with similar problems are more successful at protecting their borders. Up to 2007, most of the influx was shared between Greece, Italy and Spain. But bilateral agreements, such as Italy's with Libya and Spain's with Senegal and Mauritania, have largely closed down the Western and Central Mediterranean routes into the EU, which

¹⁶ *I.e.* Ministerial Decree(s) 26270 (7 October 2011), Government Gazette/GG 2518/B/7 November 2011; 3443 (7 September 2011), GG 2225/B/4 October 2011; 21879 (22 August 2011), GG 1914 .; 12514 1(2 May 2011), GG 826 B; 5205/11 (28 February 2011), GG 1296/./2011; 5205 (2 February 2011), GG 434 B; 22037 (1 October 2010), GG 1629 B; 10575 (11 September 2009), GG 1828 B; 17590 (2 July 2009), GG 1423 B; 1768 (27 January 2009), GG 144 .; 1356 (21 January 2009), GG 114 B; 933 (16 January 2009), GG 53 B; 27846 (11 December 2008), GG 263 B; 22466 (4 October 2008), GG 2191 B; 22467 (14 October 2008), GG 2208 B.

reopened due to the dramatic political changes in northern Africa and Syria.¹⁷ Greek attempts to negotiate a similar agreement with Turkey have stalled, and the EU seems generally reluctant to exert any effective pressure on Turkey. As an example, during the first 11 months of 2011, the second year of the economic crisis, the number of people entering Greece from the land borders with Turkey continued rising (+12%, 55,558), while from the 21,542 return orders issued for Afghanis in Greece, only 745 were deported back to Turkey (Frontex, 2012a: 13 and 14, Table 2). Recent data from the police show that 55,411 people were arrested for illegal entry during the first seven months of 2012, 13% higher than during the first seven months of the previous year (2011: 47,855), and 443 smugglers, which is 8% (481) lower than 2011 (Hellenic Police, 2012, Figures 1 and 2). 50.6% (28,060) of the entries during this seven-month period of 2012 were from the Greek-Turkish land and sea borders, in comparison with the 47.4% (22,714) illegal entries from the Greek-Turkish land and sea borders during the same period of 2011 (Hellenic Police, 2012, Figure 4).¹⁸

From the previous analysis it is apparent that despite the enormous pressure on Greece's migration and asylum systems, as well as the economic difficulties (Ethnos, 2011a), illegal entry into the country remains very high. Due to its geographic position, most of the migrants plan to move on to the wealthier countries of the continent once inside the EU. However, few of them actually manage to get that far. Thus, several of them remain (at least temporarily) in the country, in particular in Athens, Thessaloniki, the second city, and in two port cities in western Greece, Patras and Igoumenitsa. Furthermore, illegal entry in Greece is perceived as relatively easy (low return risk), and the vast majority of irregular immigrants are released shortly after arrest (Frontex calls it a 'catch-and-release' policy). In addition, the hitherto high population tolerance notwithstanding the immigrants' numbers, lifestyle and the inertia from governments and local authorities, as well as the possibility of legal status and work in the underground economy, as already referred to, makes the country an attractive destination for would-be entrants. Should the mitigation measures at the Greek borders remain largely unchanged, facilitation services offered by criminal groups, highly specialized and often headed by former migrants, can only expand (*see* Frontex, 2012b: 39).

4.6.2 Sliding into the Depths of Recession and Crime

Despite being careful not to associate immigration and official crime trends, using information sources that are limited to police, Ministry of Justice and Eurostat statistics, our interviews with local and state police and anecdotal evidence from residents suggested they felt they were experiencing at the start of the decade a surge in violence and property crimes, while unreported crime cannot be estimated (*see also* Zarafonitou, 2008).

Looking closely at recorded criminal offences between 2000 and 2010, theft and burglary (416-882 per 100,000 inhabitants) and vehicle theft (159-251 per 100,000) are the most common, followed by violations of narcotic legislation (70-112 per 100,000), circulation of counterfeit currency (23-53 per 100,000), forgery (16-78 per 100,000) and robbery (14-60 per 100,000) (*cf.* Lambropoulou, 2005). It should also be noted that,

¹⁷ Frontex refers to 64,261 detections in 2011, compared with 4,450 in 2010 (2012a: 14, Table 2).

¹⁸ Data for asylum applications in 2004 are no longer available online (September 2012), nor are data concerning illegal entry in 2004 and 2005, but only from 2005 to 2006 respectively. Data used in this chapter for these years have been accessed (June 2012) before their withdrawal from the website.

according to official statistics, the proportion of crimes committed (per 100,000 inhabitants) annually increased as well, ranging from 2,092 to 4,875.

An increased rate of criminal activity has been noted since mid-2009, when the economy began to decline. According to police figures, 3,200 robberies were committed in the first six months of 2010, while 3,363 were in the first half of 2011 (Hellenic Police, 2011). Police data show that in 2010, on average, 184.6 thefts, 12.5 robberies, 0.71 bank robberies and 0.47 homicides took place daily, while in 2011, armed robberies in residences rose to 115% and in some regions even 700% (Antinews.gr, 2012, quoting Sunday Press 11 March 2012). To provide a contrast, a mere 80 robberies per annum were registered in the whole of Greece back in the 1980s (Lambropoulou, 2005). These events after 2009 indicate the largest spike in crime rates that Greece has ever seen.

Police data also show that the proportion of foreign offenders after 2007 has risen to approximately 55% in robberies, 51.4% in thefts and burglaries, 50%-51% in rapes, 57%-58.3% in sexual exploitation, 87% in violation of intellectual property (peddlers of pirated CDs and DVDs), 85%-86% in begging and, interestingly, 95%-96.4% in forgery and counterfeiting. While for many crimes the proportion of native offenders is equal to that for foreign offenders, foreign offenders are overrepresented in thefts at public places, robberies, begging/panhandling, and forgery (Hellenic Police, 2011).

According to Greek police sources, foreigners were responsible for about 65% of crimes committed in the country in 2010 – an increase of about 50% over the previous year (Hellenic Police, 2011).¹⁹ It must also be pointed out here that many more crimes were committed inside the migrant communities but were never reported, owing to the understandable reluctance of undocumented immigrants to interact with the police. Thus, the real number of crimes committed is greater than the number officially stated.

The rising level of criminality in the urban environment is becoming a heavy burden for the state. A police officer dealing with the issue for many years stated that ‘at least 75% of the night shifts in the Athenian Police Departments deal with crimes committed by undocumented immigrants and the workload is heavy and quite expensive, costing tens of millions of euros per year for the arrests made, bureaucracy, damages done to police vehicles, state property and other expenditures’ (Michaletos, 2011c). Beyond Athens, in the past two-and-a-half years, other prefectures of the country have also seen a high increase in crime as well (*i.e.* Thessaly and Crete).

Greece’s unemployment rate has been steadily rising: from 8.6% in mid-2009, it reached 16% in mid-2011 and 23.9% in mid-2012 ($n = 1,176,527$), 57% higher than during the same period in 2011, which means that there are around 109 per 1,000 recorded residents (10,787,690) officially unemployed and 235 per 1,000 people of working age (4,961,900; NSSG/ELSTAT, 2012a, 2012b). The unemployment rate for foreigners with legal residence in mid-2012 was 32.5%, while that for Greek citizens was 22.7%, and the irregular immigrant population is estimated to be higher (NSSG/ELSTAT, 2012b: 3). All in all, the legal market is unable to provide an income for a large number of the country’s residents (European Commission, 2010/2011).

To sum up, as Greece sinks deeper into recession and the influx of immigrants sees no end, it is probable that the situation will worsen and crime will rise. This puts a strain on the social infrastructure and seriously undermines society as a whole.

¹⁹ According to the official statistics of the Police for 2010 and 2011, arrests of foreigners equalled those of Greeks.

4.7 Conclusions

Greece has never actually fixed an approximate number for immigrant workers it needs, nor stipulated a quota of undocumented immigrants, as other EU countries have, which could be reviewed on a regular basis. Moreover, Greece has failed in the repatriation of illegal immigrants and, finally, it has applied what may be seen as the ‘self-defeating’ policy of ex-post facto regularization – not once but four times – and the last government embarked on a fifth round in 2010, reforming the Code of citizenship (Law 3838/2010). However, the D Section of the Council of State (the Supreme Administrative Court of Greece) judged the specific law as unconstitutional (Decision 350/2011) and forwarded the case to the plenum for a final decision (expected in 2012) due to its importance.

Eighty-six per cent of the detections of irregular migrants in 2011 on the EU’s external borders occurred in two areas, the Central Mediterranean (46%) and the Eastern Mediterranean, primarily on the land border between Greece and Turkey (40%) (Frontex, 2012a: 4-5, 12, 16-18, 39; Kasimis, 2012; Migration Policy Institute, 2010). Greek borders are too porous and practically impossible to seal. It is certain that Greece will unfortunately remain in the forefront of the EU’s illegal-immigration problem for some time (*The Economist*, 2010; see also Frontex, 2012a: 13). Austerity measures and the economic downturn in Greece could affect its capacity to perform border controls and prevent a wide array of illegal activities at the borders, ranging from illegal border crossing through smuggling of duty goods to human trafficking. Such situations enable facilitators to select those border types and sections that are perceived as weaker (Frontex, 2012a: 5). It is interesting to note the recent rapid change by smugglers in their choice of the main entry point to Greece, who now once more use islands near the Turkish sea borders because the northern border control has been strengthened (Proto Thema, 2012).

The rapid growth of criminality in Greece, which is linked to the dramatic increase in illegal immigration and economic turbulence, also has a crucial relationship with the existence of powerful criminal networks in the wider south-eastern European region (Michaletos, 2011a, 2011c). The short-term immigration policy of governments during the last two decades and their shortcomings in negotiations with the EU facilitated various parliamentary and non-parliamentary political groups and other organized interests to exploit the growth for their own benefit. Such conditions could also indirectly aid fundraising for criminal networks in the country.

The internal and external situation has further consequences for the physical and social disorder of cities, as described above. The renewal of towns and public places requires the belief of democracy in itself and its institutions, principles and values. It requires breaking with the communicative management of political correctness, the identification of problematic situations as delinquency and not as alternative social realities and a pragmatic law enforcement policy against crime and disorder (Kotoulas, 2012). This is of much significance for Greece, and Athens in particular, which have been suffering under the dominance of certain rhetoric during the last 20 years and the government’s short-sightedness.

To return to Serres’ arguments presented briefly at the beginning of this chapter, a parasite functions by destabilizing and transforming a system that it has penetrated. However, according to Serres, the parasite is the guarantor for the viability of the host. The parasite system needs the host as much as itself. Is this applicable to the networks of migrant smuggling and exploitation, and the criminal groups?

Luhmann uses the parasite example from a different perspective. Parasitic systems and networks not only use the opportunities for acting and deciding within functional systems and their organizations exclusively for themselves, *i.e.* for their own members and for the development and reinforcement of the network, but they also absorb the attention and resources of the ‘host’ system (*see also* White et al., 2007). In this way, networks are also responsible for what is generally called ‘corruption’ of the system (Luhmann, 1995: 250-251). The parasite may benefit from the weakness of the host, and destroying it. Such asymmetric structures cannot be ignored.

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