

# Greek Immigrants in Postwar Belgium: Community and Identity Formation Processes

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In this article we propose a study of the community and identity formation processes of the small, mainly working-class Greek immigrant community that settled in postwar Belgium. It covers the period from the installation of the first Greek coalminers in Belgium in 1955 up to the moment that Greece became an official member of the EEC in 1981, which gradually changed not only the legal status of Greek citizens but the host society's representation of them as well. It analyzes identity formation as a relational, dynamic and always incomplete process "lodged in contingency"<sup>1</sup> and, due to lack of space, focuses on the formation of organizational and institutional community structures rather than on the—equally important—informal everyday processes of homebuilding, placemaking, constructing networks, defining self and others or relating to the latter.

## *Discriminatory Structures and Chronic Accumulation of Disadvantage*

Postwar economic emigration from Greece to Western European countries was part of a broader pattern of relocation from the Mediterranean to the industrially developed countries of Europe, organized by the host states and the employers and closely linked

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to unequal economic and technological development. Immigration to northwestern Europe was aimed to temporarily import cheap labor to deal with the shortage of indigenous workforce as a result of the rapid industrial development after the war. Worker immigration was only permitted under temporal limits and specific terms, and host countries strove to retain the option to repatriate any foreign workers no longer necessary to the production process. From the outset host countries adopted policies for the protection of the labor market and the local workforce from any competition from foreign workers.

Postwar emigration from Greece was a mass phenomenon, estimated to have affected almost one out of every eight Greeks. Sixty-one percent of the post-war migration stream headed toward northwestern Europe, especially West Germany. Although the recruitment of Greeks who went to work in Belgian coal mines had started several years before the Greek-German migration agreement of 1960, only 3 percent of the Greeks who chose European destinations went to Belgium.<sup>2</sup> Even for poor peasants with no hope of finding a job in Greece, the idea of working in coal mines was not very tempting.

The first mass emigration of Greek workers to Belgium was organized in 1955. A bilateral agreement for the emigration of Greeks to work in Belgian coal mines was signed two years later, partly safeguarding the immigrants' interests by providing—at least officially—the same terms of employment as for local miners.<sup>3</sup> From 1953 to 1964, 20,069 Greeks were employed in Belgian mines. Of those, 30 percent had returned to Greece by 1965, although the Greek population in Belgium continued to grow until 1970, reaching 22,354 members as some new immigrant workers settled in Brussels in the 1960s but mainly as families were reunited and children were born to those who stayed on.<sup>4</sup>

The majority of the initial Greek migrants were young males with low education migrating from poor rural regions of Greece directly or after a short stay in some city. Upon their arrival in Belgium the men, who emigrated on their own at first, were taken immediately to the mines without even the slightest acclimatization to the new conditions or any idea of the requirements of working there. Many of them could not stand the experience of going down the shafts and left Belgium immediately or after a few weeks. Great poverty, the pressing need to succor the family back

in Greece or the incentive of saving a small capital prompted those who stayed on to spend at least one to five years in Belgium. These had to adapt themselves, and soon learned what was necessary to their survival; with time they got used to the strict working hours, the alternating shifts, the pace of work imposed by the overseers or their peers, the work in small teams and the ethics cultivated by the common danger, the interdependence but also the common desire for quick profit. They began to understand and use—at least in part—the language of the host country and the codes of behavior in the workplace. They got used to the complex computation of the wage according to the type of work or the amounts of coal extracted or loaded, to the fortnightly payments, to the minor or major treacheries of employers, social security agencies or the various intermediaries at the expense of coal miners—especially the more vulnerable foreign ones—but also, gradually, to the ways of dealing with them. The work and the workplace enforced the first, direct and major changes in the immigrants' way of living and shaped their initial—mostly painful—experiences. In their effort to deal with all kinds of adversity, some of them resorted to the defense mechanisms they had from their growing up in a destitute and tough environment in Greece. In addition to the more familiar means of self-protection, some realized the advantages of information and the power afforded by syndicalism, through their interaction with indigenous or other foreign workers in the workplace, but also thanks to the mechanisms and policies of the two major Belgian unions.<sup>5</sup>

The fact that part of their pay was sent to Greece combined with the level of wages delayed the accumulation of the capital necessary for repatriation, forcing many immigrants to prolong their stay in the host country. Furthermore, the continued offer of employment in Belgium coupled with the unemployment in Greece postponed repatriation further into the future. The more permanent nature of their settlement soon led Greek workers into starting a family or sending for their people from Greece, which in turn increased their needs and the expenses and eventually led to permanent settlement.<sup>6</sup>

After certain years of working in the mines, the immigrants who stayed on in Belgium applied for work permits for other fields of the economy. The almost total switch of Greeks from the mines to manufacturing or other jobs in urban centers during the 1960s

enriched their professional experience and their knowledge of economic and social conditions in Belgium. In 1981, 45.4 percent of the Greek population in Belgium lived in Brussels, 12.5 percent in Charleroi, 9.7 percent in Liege and the rest in smaller towns. In these cities they gathered in certain squalid neighborhoods, because of the mechanisms of the housing market, their low incomes and through the ethnic networks they developed in order to survive.<sup>7</sup> As immigrants moved from the mines to the industrial urban centers, which afforded employment opportunities for women as well, many Greek women got jobs outside the house, usually in order to help support a large family or to speed up the saving process.<sup>8</sup> Working in factories may have been less tough and dangerous compared to the mines, but it was still exhausting. The assembly line, the repetitive movements and the intense pace exhausted the workers—even more so the women, who also had to care for their home and children.<sup>9</sup>

The Greek immigrants who settled in Belgium after the war were integrated into the lowest echelons of the Belgian working class; although most of them soon left the mines, a very high proportion of those who stayed in the country continued to be in the same social ranks in 1981: in that year 26 percent of the economically active Greek population of the country was unemployed, while of those employed 63 percent were blue-collar workers.<sup>10</sup> The immigrants' social position still reflected the reasons behind the policy for importing foreign labor: they were unskilled workers destined for the most arduous, dangerous, unhealthy, badly-paid, menial jobs. The immigrants' social background, the jobs they were meant to hold in Belgium and the fact that they were foreigners prevented them from displaying the same degree of mobility as the indigenous population.

Yet thanks to the favorable economic conjuncture, most immigrants were able to greatly improve their standard of living, if not their social standing. The expectations of at least part of them—to provide for the future of their family, acquire a house in Belgium or in their country of origin and live respectably in old age—were fulfilled thanks to Belgium's postwar prosperity and the highly developed system of social security, which provided healthcare, family benefits, free education, unemployment benefits, invalidity or old-age pensions, etc. The Belgian welfare state afforded a sense of security, of which there was little or none in their country of ori-

gin.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, the time at which they immigrated may have allowed more foreigners than in other cases to escape the worker's fate, even if in practice this meant endless hours of working at a restaurant or driving a taxi.

In studying immigration to Western Europe during the 1950s and 1960s, one must bear in mind that the foreigners who were collectively recruited enjoyed a much higher degree of legal and institutional protection than all other immigrants before them and most of those after them. Foreign workers had rights and social benefits hitherto undreamed of by those who had been uprooted from their homes due to poverty and unemployment. They were protected not only by the bilateral agreements and an advanced system of social security, but also by the trade unions of the host countries. Foreigners were paid the same as local workers, and much better than their fellow countrymen who had similar jobs in their homelands.

Although these conditions were almost unique in the history of international immigration, they did not eradicate social inequality between locals and immigrants in postwar Western European societies. One of the reasons for this inequality was the universal, axiomatic belief of European societies (common in both host and sending countries, and held by almost all social groups in them) that it was fair and legitimate to unequally distribute rights between nationals and foreign citizens, and that the state had the obligation to protect its own citizens more than any foreign residents. From this universal belief, which was and still is constitutionally safeguarded and inscribed in legislation, practices and attitudes, stemmed much legal, institutional and socioeconomic discrimination against foreigners, perfectly legitimate in the conscience of most people. The immigrants' restricted rights to work, achieved through the issuing of work permits for one specific job and of limited duration, were considered as perfectly acceptable for foreigners as they would be unthinkable for the indigenous population.<sup>12</sup> The dependence of the residence permit on the existence of a work permit and the availability of jobs was one more among many examples of legalized inequality. Foreign workers in Western European societies found themselves at a legal and political disadvantage.

The objective discrepancies in wealth and power among countries was another factor of inequality between locals and foreign-

ers. When it came to negotiations, the economic and political power of the host countries prevailed over the poor, powerless in international terms and financially dependent Mediterranean countries, as it was the former that set the rules of the game. Furthermore, the economic and political inequality went together with an unequal cultural prestige, as "Western European" culture was imposed as the model and yardstick of all other cultural systems. Immigrants from the agricultural, technologically underdeveloped Mediterranean countries—thought of by Western Europeans as traditional and hence culturally inferior—were discriminated against and underestimated even before they set foot in the host countries. Besides, this evaluation was largely adopted by the societies of the sending countries and the immigrants themselves. The legal, political and social categorization of foreigners had direct repercussions on their daily lives and their self-perception and influenced the relations they developed with other social groups.

Most immigrants came from the lowest socioeconomic strata of countries that were poor, dependent and devoid of political power and influence as well as cultural radiance. They left the impoverished parts of the sending countries, where the living and working conditions they had known were often worse than the ones they found in the economically developed societies of Western Europe. In most cases they were poor and uneducated peasants, unfamiliar with the pace and demands of industrial work, urban living and the bureaucracy of the welfare state, and, in addition, did not speak the language of the host country. As a result, foreign workers were not in a position to benefit from the advantages and rights available to them.<sup>13</sup> Although not illiterate, most of them had not read their contract because they were not used to the practice of written agreements and the deciphering of legal texts in their daily lives. They were also not familiar with the concept of deadlines and the bureaucratic procedures that were the standard practice of state agencies, insurance services and industrial management; meanwhile, they were unable to read and understand the relevant instructions. They did not know many of their rights, or how to take advantage of the various benefits. They depended to a great extent on the often inadequate and inconsistent information from the old hands or the very few interpreters and social workers. Furthermore, their wish to save some money and return home as

soon as possible, the fatigue from hard work and lack of familiarity with the experience discouraged systematic learning of the language or enrolment in professional training courses. More generally, the plan to repatriate often obstructed effective adaptation and familiarization with the new environment.

Nominal equality in terms of working conditions, rights, welfare benefits, etc., was effectively undermined by the actual social inequality. The inferior ranking of their home country on the international economic, political and cultural arena and their own low status within the hierarchy of the society in which they were born and raised largely determined their position within the host country's society, rendering them vulnerable in multiple ways. The immigrants' national and social origin, their limited education and partially different cultural capital, combined with the new social relations into which they were incorporated, determined their low social position within the industrially developed countries in which they settled, where they were hired as unskilled labor for jobs the locals refused to do. The double marginalization, as a result of their being both foreign and unskilled workers, had a cumulative effect.

The favorable economic conditions lasted until the early 1970s. Already since 1967 the Belgian state had embarked on new measures that restricted the rights of foreign workers, and the number of work permits issued was reduced.<sup>14</sup> Of course, the employers—whose interests run against these measures—continued to hire “illegal” immigrants after the official government policy had changed.

In the late 1960s social conflict intensified in the workplace and unrest seized many universities. Amidst this climate, the participation of immigrants in the strikes, the discharge of foreign strikers, the government measures against foreign students and the reaction of their Belgian fellow students brought to the surface the “immigrant problem.” Until then all matters concerning foreign workers had been resolved as part of the bilateral immigration agreements; now the state was under pressure to define the immigrants' status and rights irrespective of the agreements it had signed.<sup>15</sup> Trade unions, in particular, played a decisive role in bringing into broader discussion the phenomenon of immigration and the need for the social integration of foreigners in the society.<sup>16</sup> The greater numbers of immigrants and in particular the massive

presence of their families, combined with the increasing number of scientific studies and various public statements on this issue, also contributed to a change of views regarding immigration. At the same time, immigrants' societies and mixed associations made their presence felt more than before. To some extent Belgian society ceased to see immigrants as temporary labor and gradually realized that they were already permanent residents of the country.

Immediately after the oil crisis of 1973-1974, the Belgian state aligned its policy with the other Western European countries and banned immigration in 1974. Later on, in 1980, the policy on the reunification of families was also made stricter and more restrictive. In 1984, the Belgian government made a timid attempt to provide various incentives for immigrants to repatriate. However, the economic crisis, unemployment and insecurity made foreign workers precipitate the process of permanent settlement instead of going back home. Exercising their established rights, more and more immigrants brought over their families to settle in the host country.

The final ban on immigration served also to increase tension rather than reduce it, as it rendered more clear the fact that immigrants were there for good. Xenophobia manifested itself overtly when certain groups of Belgians, realizing the permanent presence of immigrants, felt that it threatened their own claim to social benefits. New negative stereotypes for immigrants became widespread since the early 1970s; among them, the image of the immigrant who takes advantage of and abuses the benefits of social security. Discrimination against foreigners shifted toward the more recent Muslim immigrants. The clash of trade unions (and other organizations that fought for immigrants' rights) with the policies for the restriction of foreigners' rights adopted by the government at various times and with the racist behavior of some population groups had mixed results.<sup>17</sup>

*Dominant Regimes of Representation:  
The Stereotype of the Mediterranean*

Before the war, given the relatively marginal positions of Greece and Belgium in international developments and the little contact between the two countries, any concrete picture of Greece

and the Greeks would be likely to be held only by the relatively small groups of educated Belgians. This picture, as in all Western European countries, was formed largely with reference to the classical Greek heritage. The accounts of travelers and newspaper correspondents—both important sources of information for literate people in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—compared contemporary Greeks with their ancient “ancestors” and the “West” and thus elaborated and promoted the stereotype of a modern Greece with “oriental” characteristics.<sup>18</sup>

After the war some Belgian philhellenes started to organize, with support from the embassy and the community, lectures and film projections on modern Greece, its landscapes, its people’s mores and customs along with its historical heritage. There were several attempts to establish new Greek-Belgian societies. However, in the 1950s, and even more so in the next decade, the interest in Greece—in Western Europe as a whole but also in Belgium in particular—spread from a limited elite to broader social groups, thanks to better access to education and the cultural products from other countries as well as through tourism, the media and advertising.

The development of tourism brought many Belgian travelers to the Mediterranean.<sup>19</sup> A holiday in Greece was promoted as an escape from the stress and the maladies of developed Western European societies toward a picturesque, genuine, more primitive life—a life closer to nature. An important role in shaping this stereotyped image of the country was played by the Greek state and the travel agencies, which used exoticism—“the sensationalizing of cultural difference”<sup>20</sup>—in their drive to advance tourism.

The Belgians’ acquaintance with modern Greece came at a time when the image of exotic yet familiar Mediterranean societies started to fascinate the expanding classes of socially mobile Europeans. The perception of Greece was based on a more general stereotyped image of Mediterranean countries, which had been formed in earlier times and was confirmed and reinforced by various mediators. Southern Europe was seen as a relatively uniform set of weak countries with lagging economies and was constantly compared to the model of modernized Western Europe; the stereotype was based on the juxtaposition between modernity and tradition.<sup>21</sup> The mass promotion of certain Greek films and the diffusion of some Greek songs and novels in the late 1950s and

early 1960s contributed in a major way to the formation of a particular perception of Greeks in Western Europe and, of course, in Belgium, enriching the stereotyped contemporary Mediterranean culture with its Greek version.<sup>22</sup>

Given the small numbers of Greek immigrant workers compared to the Italians and the Spaniards, their presence in Belgium does not seem to have radically changed the image of Greece or the Greeks. Another factor was that they arrived after large numbers of Italians and a little before the settlement of Moroccan and Turkish immigrants.<sup>23</sup> The Greeks were thus included in the broader group of Mediterranean people and were invested with more or less the same stereotyped characteristics. Outside the workplace, the immigrants were associated—mainly by the newspapers of Wallonia, where most foreign workers lived until the late 1960s—with feasts dominated by the “hot Mediterranean temperament,” spontaneity, etc. In these feasts, mostly Italian but also Spanish and Greek, a few “national” dishes, some music and a couple of folk dances were sufficient for holding an “evening of friendship.”<sup>24</sup>

During the 1960s, some Greeks opened restaurants addressed to a Belgian clientele. These establishments conformed to the dominant image of Greece that was already part of the average Belgian’s mass culture, at the same time reinforcing it. The decor referred almost invariably to antiquity (murals depicting scenes from the Homeric epics, copies of ancient statues, models of the Parthenon, etc.) as well as the “oriental” character of modern Greece’s folk culture (worry-beads, “national” costumes, hand-woven textiles, etc.). On the whole, “oriental” modern Greece had a stronger presence, with the typical dishes, Turkish coffee as well as the *bouzouki* music and the *syrtaki* and *chasapiko* dances.

The dictatorship and the activities of some Belgians against the colonels’ regime temporarily turned the interest of part of Belgian society to another aspect of Greece, without, however, permanently displacing the firmly established static image of Mediterranean countries. On the other hand, the economic and political changes that led to the expansion of the powers of the EEC, the policy of European integration and the attempts to construct a “European” identity, combined with the diminished social conspicuousness of the immigrants from southern Europe, gradually softened, over the 1980s and 1990s, the Western Europeans’

stereotypes and prejudice against the Mediterranean peoples of the old continent.

*"European" Identity and the Alliance against the Third Person*

In Belgium as well as in other host countries there were successive waves of immigration, of different sizes and dominated each by a different nationality. Each wave of immigration triggered a social process of redefinition of rank, roles and prestige. Under this process the foreigners would often compete for dominance over the social and economic space allowed them by the indigenous population.

The first Greeks to arrive at the Belgian coal mines came from the Dodecanese islands; they may have known nothing about Belgium and the Belgians, but they had firm stereotypes about the Italians because of the recent Italian rule of their islands, the Greek-Italian war of 1940 and the occupation of part of Greece by the Italian army during the Second World War.<sup>25</sup> Yet the main problem was that, given their large numbers, their earlier presence in the country, their familiarity with the language and the organization and militancy of some of them, many Italians were next to the Belgians in constituting a sort of workers' aristocracy in the closed and tough world of coal mines. For much the same reasons they had greater protection by their government and a network of social workers and Catholic organizations.<sup>26</sup> The Greeks naturally compared their situation with that of the Italians—i.e., with those with whom they felt closer, given their similar social position—and felt they were hard done by.<sup>27</sup>

On the other hand, the very few relevant testimonies suggest that some Italians saw the advent of Greeks in a hostile fashion, fearing that they would lose the few privileges they had as a result of their great numbers and their monopoly of postwar economic immigration to Belgium.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, friction among foreign workers was a frequent phenomenon, due to the individualistic motives of immigrants who suffered many hardships in order to improve their lives as soon as possible, and the nature of work in the mines, which demanded small groups with strict internal hierarchy, where, however, everyone's life depended on cooperation and solidarity among their peers. The Italians, being veterans, often

headed the small teams that went down the shafts. Many of them were specialists in cutting coal and were paid according to their output, so they would naturally grudge the onus of having to train new workers with whom they could not even communicate. All this made it easy for the atmosphere to be charged with everyday misunderstandings in the workplace or the hostels for foreign miners.

Furthermore, the different religious and eating habits and the different language—heterogeneity in general—made both Italians and Greeks distrustful or hostile up to a point. Typically, the problem that came up regularly at the hostels was that of foreign eating habits. The Greeks, being few and scattered, were often annoyed by the frequency with which they were served “pasta” or other “Italian” dishes. As we know, food is part of a ritual that helps to confirm social relations but also to assert difference and establish borderlines. In addition to genuine aversion and the eating habits cultivated since childhood, friction at the hostels was largely associated with each national group’s prestige and the rivalry among foreign immigrants.

Relations among the various ethnic groups that coexisted in the mines were not idyllic, especially in the early years, as the majority of workers were uprooted men who lived destitute and lonely lives and worked under extremely tough conditions. In most cases they were peasants who had switched overnight from ploughing fields to digging coal mines; from their familiar village community to living among strangers with whom communication was either impossible or very limited. The often interrelated feelings of male honor and national pride gave rise to a lot of fights and animosity. The immigrants’ prejudices and stereotypes were part of the mental tools with which they could make sense and interpret what was happening to them.

Foreign coal miners had to live with rejection and contempt on the part of the Belgian society, at the same time feeling that they had been “sold” and abandoned by their own country. As it is often the case in situations like that, when the Greeks arrived, the Italians, who were experiencing their own sense of uprooting and their share of Belgian enmity,<sup>29</sup> felt that there were others in a worse position than themselves whom they could treat as inferior in their turn. The sociologist E. Dimitras cites a typical incident he was told during his research on Greek immigrants in Charleroi

in 1960: the arrogant attitude of some Italians toward the Greeks made one Greek worker respond by writing on the wall of an underground gallery in a mine: "Greece gave her lights to humanity!"—to which the immediate answer of the Italians was, "yes, but not modern Greece!"<sup>30</sup> As in many other instances in modern Greek history, antiquity was enlisted here to raise the contemporary Greeks' self-esteem when others trampled on it.

In spite of all this one should not remain with the impression of a generalized animosity and an overall negative atmosphere of rivalry between Italians and Greeks or among the various ethnic groups in general. The common threat of death, accidents or anthracosis and the necessarily joint effort to survive and earn more in the galleries were existential experiences common to all.<sup>31</sup> Over time, the fact that immigrants lived together in hostels, villages or neighborhoods, in relative isolation from the Belgian population, the common working and living conditions, the shared experience of being foreigners, and the feeling of exploitation, contempt and abandonment became very powerful elements of unification. The gradual arrival of their families and the decision for even temporary settlement eased the tension, while time turned the fearsome new experiences into familiar ones.

Besides, to look at the other side of the coin, the fact that the initial core of Dodecanesian Greek immigrants were familiar with the Italians and, more importantly, with their language facilitated communication and afforded an opportunity for more meaningful contact and relations. After the 1956 disaster at the Marcinel mine, which caused the death of over 136 Italian immigrants, and the subsequent migration agreements with Spain and Greece, rivalry and tension gradually eased off as the Italians eventually accepted the idea of coexistence. Finally, trade unions and the left waged a systematic war against ethnic rivalry and gradually fostered the spirit and manifestations of solidarity. In 1968, when the implementation of the relevant agreements among EEC member-states provided Italian immigrants with more rights and privileged treatment, the unions fought for similar working conditions for the rest of the foreign workers. Therefore, animosity went side-by-side with manifestations of solidarity, support practices and joint efforts in the struggle against overseers, in a spirit of internationalism.

The arrival and settlement of immigrants from Muslim coun-

tries gradually changed the situation again.<sup>32</sup> Workers from Morocco and Turkey—who came last and entered the labor market just before the eruption of the economic crisis—found themselves in turn at the lowest rung of the professional and social ladder and took up the jobs abandoned or rejected by older immigrants. Moreover, Western European prejudice and enmity toward these countries and their peoples were traditionally much more powerful than the animosity against the Christians from the Mediterranean; Muslim immigrants, whose social visibility was higher, due to the stigmatization of their dress and other habits, represented for Belgians the most “backward” element within their society. By the end of the 1970s, in the mind of most Belgians the word “immigrant” was already equated with “Muslim,” “Arab,” “Moroccan” or “Turk”; the definition of the notion “foreigner” had changed, and immigrants of European origin had become almost socially invisible. The situation in many Muslim countries as shown by the media, the growth of Islamic movements and their stigmatization, the Rushdie affair and other events reinforced Western European societies’ negative image of the “quintessential foreigners” who lived in their midst. The simultaneous adoption of an EEC policy of forming a “European” citizenship and a “European” identity not only excluded Muslim immigrants from various privileges, but also increased their distinction from the ethnic groups of European origin living in Belgium. Through these processes the Greek immigrants, along with those from Italy and Spain, became part of a new, single category as the host society began to perceive them as “Europeans.”<sup>33</sup>

And when these people say *étrangers* [foreigners] they mean the Moroccans. . . . I’ve heard it with my own ears at the factory, from young people, that is, my boss’s son, . . . who told me as much: “Why do you count yourself as a foreigner? You shouldn’t consider yourself a foreigner. You are now in the Common Market, you are a European.”<sup>34</sup>

*Greek Community Formation Processes:  
Organizational Structures and Conflicts*

When they arrived in Belgium and for some decades, however, the unskilled Greek workers faced contempt for their cultural

practices and religious beliefs and were treated with hostility and prejudice by the indigenous population. In order to cope with the difficulties arising from their low social status, the hostile environment and the linguistic barriers, to satisfy their everyday needs (baptisms, weddings, funerals) but also to create opportunities for social contact, the immigrants, apart from the informal networks they set up, frequented Greek Orthodox churches, enrolled in the Greek sections of Belgian trade unions and organized themselves into communities.

As the numbers of Greek coal miners in Belgium increased, the Orthodox Church and the Greek government wished to establish suitable structures for preserving their religious and national sentiment, and in this they had the warm support of the mines' management. The Church was one of the first organizational and control structures for immigrants, endorsed and supported by all sides—Greek and Belgian, clerical and secular. Amid the Cold War climate of the time, Greek Orthodox priests were officially appointed at the mines to help preserve "healthy national principles" and "effectively protect Greek nationals against the diffusion of communism or any antisocial ideas, to the interests of the Federation [of mine owners—Fédéchar]."<sup>35</sup> Until the late 1960s the mines had on their payroll Greek priests who, in addition, received occasional sums from the secret funds of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>36</sup> As in the case of Italian immigrants, the priests were called upon by the employers as well as the governments to exercise a social, political and ideological control over the workers. Yet, contrary to the organizations and the ministers of the Catholic Church, the social work of Greek Orthodox priests who preached in the mine areas seems to have been extremely limited. Most of them restricted themselves to rare visits at hospitals, collecting money in cases of death and, mostly, to moral injunctions and calling for the need for upholding traditions.

Irrespective of the reasons priests were appointed to work in the coal mining areas of Belgium, the Greek Orthodox Church, as an institution with a long tradition and established structures and fully experienced in managing coexistence with other religions and national groups, was able to use its traditions and ceremonies to transplant various emotionally and ideologically charged rituals and symbols and perpetuate fragments of collective memory and the past. The symbols of the past, invested with a mythical

timelessness, acquired great power through the security the sense of familiarity and continuity afforded to the immigrants—that is, to people who had settled in a place where almost everything was unfamiliar and to some extent hostile, thus causing stress and fear, and who had to change radically and abruptly many aspects of their way of living.

The differences between Catholics and Orthodox—in terms of ritual, church decoration, Easter customs and traditions or even the different sign of the cross—were some of the elements that served to reinforce the awareness of common roots among the Greeks and of their differences from the other people who lived in Belgium. This elevation by the church of barriers between Greeks and the locals included an attempt to check the relationships between young workers, single or away from their families, and Belgian women. Church writings portrayed foreign women as all but prostitutes, compared to Greek women, who were described as caring, pure and morally impeccable.<sup>37</sup> By restricting the nature and frequency of contact between Greek Orthodox men and Catholic Belgian women, the church was trying to impose an informal set of rules and distinguish between acceptable and forbidden forms of interaction and relationships among the ethnic groups that lived in the same place.

The Greek Orthodox Church in Belgium, just as in other expatriate communities, promoted among the Greeks processes and fields of convergence in which religious practices emerged as signs of recognition, meant to express and reinforce solidarity as well as to signify the social distance that set them apart from other religious and ethnic groups. The church had the authority and the power to mark out certain features as symbols of the immigrants' identity, to reduce the conspicuousness and importance of the differences among the various categories of Greek immigrants and, at the same time, to erect barriers to communication with other population groups.

After 1974, the standing of the church was shaken due to the supportive attitude of certain priests toward the dictatorial government, and its prestige was diminished, if temporarily, in the political and ideological atmosphere that followed the restitution of democracy in Greece. At the same time, the Greek Orthodox Church itself gradually changed its strategy in Belgium: it sought legalization, prestige, recognition and financial support from the

host country and embarked on a campaign to preserve religious conscience among the immigrants' children and grandchildren through the structures of Belgian society. Hence, from 1982, the new Metropolitan of Belgium initiated actions to have the Orthodox doctrine officially recognized by the Belgian state.<sup>38</sup> Eventually, a ministerial act of 1985 recognized the Orthodox doctrine and the metropolitan appointed by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople as its representative. Since 1988, Orthodox priests have been paid their wages by the Belgian state, while pupils in Belgian schools are entitled, at least in theory, to be taught the Orthodox religion.

Initially, the only structures for the reception of Greek coal miners other than the church were the Belgian unions, which were massive and powerful in the 1950s and 1960s. The unions, apart from trying to curtail the number of foreign workers, also aimed at preventing the employers from preferring to hire immigrants; hence they sought equal treatment of the latter, protected their rights and encouraged the spread of syndicalism among them. Toward the end of the 1940s, the Belgian Christian Syndicate helped organize the installation of the Italian immigrants and started propaganda by creating an Italian section, which published a newspaper in Italian. Profiting from this experience, soon after the mass arrival of Greek workers in the coal mines a Greek section was set up within the Belgian Christian Syndicate, initially providing services with a view to solving the various pressing problems with wages, social security and benefits and translating the necessary documents at no charge. With this kind of support it attracted many immigrants and brought some of them out of their isolation. The Greek section of the Belgian Christian Syndicate also provided lessons on language and syndicalism and published a newspaper in Greek for many decades.<sup>39</sup> Through this newspaper the syndicate's officials strove to change the immigrants' attitude toward the function of trade unionism and cultivate solidarity and a unionist and class conscience. Many were soon convinced to participate in strikes and other activities, thus becoming familiar with the meaning and the practices of syndicalism. As the only Greek-language publication in Belgium for many years and the only one to have been published consistently for decades, the newspaper served as a unique source of information about work and everyday life, immigrants' rights and the

opportunities for economic and social integration, which would have remained otherwise inaccessible to them. Another Greek section was formed in the Socialist Syndicate in the 1960s, which engaged in similar activities.

The Greek sections of the two Belgian syndicates designated and gave form and substance to the multiple identities of the Greek, the immigrant, the foreigner, the worker and the unionist, presenting them not as mutually exclusive but as capable of co-existing. Hence they presented the immigrants with alternative identities that could exist in parallel with their already formed national and religious identity. The enrolment of a significant number of immigrants in trade unions,<sup>40</sup> even if temporarily and based on personal motives, the opportunity to read a union paper, to participate in events and take lessons were all new experiences and important points of reference for many of the Greeks in Belgium. For those immigrants, who came mostly from the rural parts of a country without much of a union movement, these experiences transformed them and made them more open toward Belgian society and the other foreigners. In linking their own problems with those of other foreign and Belgian workers, the Greek immigrants acquired the ability to interpret what was going on in ways that were new to many of them.

The Greek sections of the Belgian syndicates were the only institutions besides the church that had access to so many Greeks for such a long period of time. They served as agents of change and centers of osmosis, whose range reached far more than their active members, thanks to the services they offered, their prestige and their extensive network of representatives. They functioned as mediators between the immigrants and Belgian society and played a decisive role in the integration process by providing an arena, however limited, for social and political participation. While they saw to the preservation of the Greek language and the Orthodox creed, they also strove for the adaptation of the immigrants to Belgian society and the adoption of many of its values and codes of behavior.<sup>41</sup> The Greek communities and the conflicts within them played a more ambiguous role, which we will examine through the example of the most important among them, the Greek community of Brussels.

Until the mid-1950s, the Greeks in Belgium were few. Most of them came from territories of the Ottoman empire, from cen-

ters of the Greek diaspora or the commercial and maritime areas of Greece. They had the knowledge of foreign languages, the cosmopolitan outlook and the familiarity with the west of those who were engaged in trade and shipping.<sup>42</sup> True to the old traditions of expatriate communities, the Greeks of Antwerp and, later, Brussels, established communities and churches in order to preserve their language and religious identity, passing them on to the younger generations, and to develop networks of solidarity. At the time, of course, embassies and consulates, sometimes in cooperation with religious authorities, often abetted expatriate communities, so that the source country retained economic and other contacts with its expatriate citizens and was able to influence and control them.

Until the 1950s the majority of Greeks in Belgium were literate members of the middle classes. The significant rate of ethnic exogamy and naturalization, as seen from the church archives, reveals an upwardly mobile community with a strategy of incorporation into Belgian society. Hence its public profile until the mid-1950s was of Western European character; its sense of difference was restricted to the community members and focused on religious identity. It was only the "Greek Community of Brussels," established during the Second World War, in 1943, which also saw to the preservation of a national identity centered on ancestral glory and the commemoration of struggles against the enemies of Greece.

The arrival of immigrant workers in the coal-producing areas in the late 1950s gave rise to conflicts and animosity among the Greeks in Belgium. The majority of the earlier expatriates did not receive the Greek coal miners with feelings of solidarity. It seems that they even resented their consorting with workers during religious services, claiming that "the church has become full of coal dust." Some of them feared that the Belgian society would equate them with their socially inferior compatriots, which would jeopardize their prestige and impede the processes of upward social mobility for themselves and their offspring.<sup>43</sup>

When ex-coal miners settled in Brussels in the early 1960s and the left became more active, the already existing oppositions found fertile ground in the Greek Community of Brussels. Until then the community had brought together wealthy merchants and professionals and was essentially under the tutelage of the Greek

embassy. However, for the first time in the 1962 elections the administrative council included workers. The changed composition of the council brought about a partially modified community policy. Some of the older members of the community also gradually recognized the changes from the settlement of immigrant workers in Belgium and the need to deal with them.

In 1962, just a few months after the negotiations leading to the liaison of Greece with the Common Market, the new chairman of the community submitted to the Greek prime minister a report on the problems of his compatriots and a request for financial support. His arguments revolved around the importance of cultivating a respectable image of Greeks in the home city of the EEC, thus revealing one of the reasons for which a small fraction of earlier expatriates became interested in the coal miners' fate: "Given that 95 percent of the newcomers [ex-coal miners in Brussels] are completely ignorant of the language, they have a great many difficulties in their relations with employers, social security agencies, etc., and they often aggravate their position as ignorance and lack of support turns them into *negative elements for the Greek image and prestige*. In order to prevent this and to the extent possible, our community strives to help and *guide* them in various ways, to the detriment of the personal interests and professional activities of some of us."<sup>44</sup> Another text, justifying his involvement with the social rights of the immigrants, reveals the political aspect of the change of policy: "the former ambassador has admitted that he used to urge coal miners *not* to enrol in syndicates, fearing the political character of these organizations. Hence the workers were unprotected against the employers and unable to afford the defense of their case. Such unfortunate examples *foolishly reinforce allegations that are politically manipulated against the Greek government*. . . . They are not all of them nice and quiet, we also have bullies and *communists*. . . . But once saddled with them, what can I do?"<sup>45</sup>

According to this rationale, the new chairman (from 1962 to 1964) saw to the collection of funds, the operation of temporary offices, the resolution of the problems of many immigrants with social security, and to the weekly operation of two community afternoon schools for their children. He employed his knowledge of the Belgian labor market and his contacts to find jobs for many newly arrived workers and secure work permits for them. He formulated the immigrants' demands and submitted them to the

Greek Labor Attaché in Germany, to the consulate in Brussels and to Greek government officials; in 1964, he secured the approval of a subsidy to the community by the Greek government.<sup>46</sup>

Very soon, however, the administrative council was divided on the question of the eligibility of immigrant workers as community members. The older members tried to find legitimate ways to exclude the newcomers, the most handy being the requirement for prospective members to have certain types of work and residence permits and to have lived in Brussels for at least three years.<sup>47</sup> Yet despite the efforts to exclude them, by 1963 workers already formed the majority;<sup>48</sup> this was due to the increasing numbers of immigrants settling in Brussels and the policy of the left to infiltrate the community with the prospect of assuming its management through the sheer numbers of workers who became members. During 1963-1964 the left focused on this target, urging the workers under its influence to enrol in the community.<sup>49</sup>

The left contributed in a major way to the functioning of immigrant communities in Belgium and to increasing awareness around political issues. Given the limited potential of Greek immigrants for self-organization—due to the cumulative effect of the rural background of their majority, their low social status in Belgium and the fact that they were foreigners—the left-wing party with its coordinated efforts and its experienced officials played a catalytic role in transferring power from the earlier, wealthy expatriates to the recently arrived workers wherever organized Greek communities pre-existed, or in establishing new communities in other places.

In the 1965 elections for a new administrative council almost none of the older community members were elected; new names appeared and workers were the major force.<sup>50</sup> Politically, the new council was divided between centrist and left wing. The conservative earlier expatriates and members of the Greek diplomatic authorities reacted violently when they saw they had lost control of the community, calling the Belgian police to step in, without any effect, however.<sup>51</sup> After the workers' victory in the Brussels community, immigrants in other Belgian cities followed their example and established—or gained control of—almost all communities in Belgium.

The earlier expatriates had long and strong connections with the Greek and Belgian authorities, and it was they who had set up

and run the Greek Community of Brussels for almost two decades. However, despite their attempts to exclude the socially inferior newcomers, the sheer numbers of immigrant workers who came to Brussels in the early 1960s combined with the activities of the left prevented them from retaining control of the community. For immigrants, the stake was the creation of a social space where they could feel safe through the use of familiar codes and develop contacts and support networks to deal more effectively with exclusion and social disadvantage; for the left, it was mainly to gain influence on those who were thought of as future members of Greece's working class.

The community from 1965 onward cultivated the relationship between immigrants and Greek politics, preparing memoranda and submitting resolutions to the Greek parliament and organizing protest actions and rallies. It connected the problems of workers abroad with the politics of the Greek governments; formulated the demand for the emigrants' right to vote in their homeland's elections; and worked for the release of political prisoners and the restitution of constitutional law and order in Greece. Immediately after the coup of 1967 the community joined the Commission for Antidictatorial Struggle, and political issues in Greece became its almost exclusive activity; it was actively involved in the instigation of most antidictatorship manifestations and had contacts with the Belgian organizations that supported these actions. So the left succeeded, at least for a brief period of time, in sensitizing many immigrants—ex-peasants who had lived in the post-civil-war repressive political climate in Greece and had just joined the working class of Belgium—to partly break the barriers of fear and develop serious activities under a legitimate organizational structure.

In September 1967, a few months after the coup in Greece, the earlier expatriates established a separate community in Brussels that remained in close cooperation with the Greek authorities throughout the dictatorship. Social and political identity and the divergent strategies brought the older members of the community into open conflict with the immigrant workers. From 1967 until their unification in 1991, Brussels had two Greek "communities"—that of the left-wing workers and the "nationalist" one. As the Greeks in Brussels were divided into two associations, with left-wing workers in one and diplomatic, military and religious

officials and earlier expatriates in the other, political identity was largely equated with class identity; as a result of this equation, the fact was ignored that there were very many workers who were not left-wing as well as a not insignificant number of communist intellectuals and students.

The intimidating and repressive tactics of the military regime, the split of the Greek Communist Party in 1968 and other factors aggravated the discord among immigrants and brought about the progressive disbanding of their collective organizations over the duration of the dictatorship.<sup>52</sup> The majority confined themselves to cultural activities like language lessons, dance groups, film projections, and to their private lives. Even many left-wing immigrants became disillusioned and abandoned politics; only a few continued to wage war against the "nationalist" association, trying to disrupt its activities, collecting donations for the families of political prisoners and making efforts to increase public awareness of the situation in Greece in Western Europe. Many immigrants from the 1950s up to the political changeover in 1974 vacillated between periods of intense involvement in politics—the organization of communities and all sorts of associations—and periods of fear, indifference and the exclusive pursuit of their goal for economic security and the amelioration of their families' perspectives. With the exception of those in the many antidictatorship groups and committees, it was only after the dictatorship that the Greeks in Belgium took up politics *en masse* again, just like those who lived in Greece.

The appearance of PASOK—the new Greek socialist party—organizations among the immigrants after the dictatorship gradually changed the balance of political powers within the communities. The Brussels community, clearly more massive by then, remained in the hands of the Communist Party for some years, only to fall from its control in 1979. In the 1980s, the age structure and social composition of the community's membership and leadership changed through the increased presence of students and Greek employees of the EEC in Brussels. At the same time that the legitimacy of political parties was reduced, Greek government policy toward expatriates shifted and the community assumed the role of mediator between the Greeks in Belgium and the governments of the host and sending countries or the EEC. Moreover, on the one hand the establishment of several associa-

tions of immigrants originating from specific regions of Greece during the 1980s and on the other hand the formation of the Federation of Greek Communities in Belgium in 1988 brought about specialization and centralization; these and other factors radically changed the physiognomy of the community. The fusion of the two Brussels communities in 1991 completed the transformation: in the first election of the unified community the conservative camp got 39 percent of the votes for the first time in almost thirty years, while the Communist Party received just 19 percent.

Political and class conflicts had arisen in Greek communities from the arrival of the first immigrant workers in the mid-1950s until well into the 1990s, particularly in the community of the capital, where most of the Greeks who stayed on in the country had settled by the early 1960s. These conflicts influenced the processes of ethnic identity formation of the Greeks in Belgium, the choice of its cultural markers as well as of the groups from which they distinguished themselves.

Prewar associations of Greeks in Belgium focused on preserving religion and forming a basically upwardly mobile class-related identity. In the decade 1955-1965 their strategy slowly changed; the novel emphasis on distinctive features, the importation of cultural elements from Greece, the integration of other products from the mass culture of the west and the invention of traditions contributed to the emergence of an ethnic identity. These changes are indicative, on the one hand, of the stereotypical picture of modern Greece, which, as we saw, was spreading among Belgians as a result of tourist development, the appearance of Greek restaurants in Brussels, the success of certain Greek films and songs abroad and the earlier expatriates' adjustment to the growing power of the image Belgium had of the exotic folk culture of Greece; on the other hand, they show the growing concern of the officials of the older associations about the public image of Greeks—which they felt to be threatened by the arrival of immigrant workers—in the period before and after the liaison of Greece with the EEC in 1961, when it is likely that the older expatriates had expectations of an upgraded economic, administrative or political role as a result of their strategic position in Brussels. So they gradually shifted from a strategy of assimilation into Belgian society to the underlining of a cultural specificity.

Up to the mid-1950s, the annual feasts of the Greek commu-

nity of Brussels and the balls organized every year by the Sisterhood of Greek Ladies under the auspices of the embassy had a clearly Western European music and dance program. In 1954 the children of community members presented some Greek dances, albeit without overturning the dominant Western European style. From 1955, Greek songs and dances became a permanent part of the program, side by side with the Western European ones. A separate "Greek evening" with *bouzouki* was first organized by the community in 1956, with a band that was passing through Brussels. Some "Greek" dishes were offered in the 1960s. By 1970 the orchestra was exclusively Greek.<sup>53</sup> Handwoven goods, folk dancing, *bouzouki*, *syrtaki*, worry-beads, moussaka and souvlaki, Melina Mercouri and Zorba—what the mass culture of Western European societies and the Greek tourist industry had promoted as constitutive features of "Greekness"—became the new markers of the emerging Greek ethnic identity.

In other words, the active members of the old community began to generate an ethnic identity bridging older features, like the Greek language or the Orthodox religion, with innovative cultural markers. In this process of *bricolage* they made use of: (a) elements of the (unfamiliar, to them) cultures of a rural Greece that had acquired a new value in the eyes of many Greek nationalist intellectuals since the late nineteenth century and were gradually legitimized by the Greek state; (b) practices or tastes of other groups of Greek society, just as foreign to expatriates in Belgium as were the Asia Minor refugees; (c) products of Greek intellectuals and artists; and (d) the stereotypical images held by Belgian society about the culture of southern Europeans. Hence they gradually introduced into their events disparate elements from rural regional cultures, the cultures of the urban popular classes as well as many creations of intellectuals and artists, adapting them to the dominant image of Mediterranean peoples as constructed by western societies. Some cultural traits promoted by the older expatriates touched sensitive chords in the immigrant workers of rural extraction who were raised within an—evolving—peasant culture; some of these markers were already familiar to the latter due to their dissemination by the Greek radio stations or the film industry; some easily fitted in with their nostalgia and others, although novel, were eventually assimilated or instrumentally used.

Nevertheless, the political and class distinctions and conflicts among the Greeks in Brussels contributed to the formation of parallel strong—although often amorphous—political and class identities. The class dimension influenced the varied cultural forms and created the need for the earlier expatriates to differentiate themselves from their working-class compatriots. Concerned about the image Belgium had of Greeks, the former promoted a “dignified,” “respectable” version of “Greek culture” with professional folk dancing groups and musicians in neutral spaces. They also attempted to check and ostracize any manifestations that did not fit this scheme. As the merchant chairman of the Greek Community of Brussels noted in 1962, “in the last year three restaurants and six cafes of Greek character have opened . . . and every weekend there are *wild* feasts with . . . native instruments, *bouzouki* and *klarino*. This is the prevailing mentality, and it is sad for most people. That’s why *I try to restrain them* as much as I can.”<sup>54</sup> The promotion of scraps of folk or popular culture—real or invented, traditional or contemporary—by wealthy and educated members of the community legitimated it and invested it with social recognition. At the same time, however, the rhetoric and symbols employed by them were indirectly a normative standard of which cultural markers were fitting and worthy and what it meant to be Greek.

From the beginning of the 1960s, domestic politics in Greece as well as the active role undertaken by the left in immigrants’ issues and in the processes of their self-organization led to fierce struggles for dominance in the Greek Community in Brussels. These conflicts thwarted until the late 1970s the efforts of the politically conservative earlier expatriates, the Greek governmental officials and the church to construct a uniform “national” identity of the Greeks who lived in Belgium and conceal the social inequalities and political discords between them. Thus, the dominant normative discourse of the political and social elite of Greeks living in Brussels failed to impose itself uniformly and without resistance; on the contrary, it met with opposition from the organized groups of immigrant workers who had the necessary endorsement from the left. The immigrant groups succeeded in promoting leader figures among the workers and the left-wing intellectuals, and they managed the community while propounding up to a point a competitive discourse and practice. They often

used the same rhetoric and the same symbols of ethnic identity, yet they invested them with different meaning and often reversed their hierarchy. These conflicts prevented the emergence of a unified ethnic group even after the fall of the junta in 1974, notwithstanding the fact that all the political forces involved—including the left—were oriented toward Greece and aimed at the preservation of emigrants' national conscience and identity.

By creating and reproducing a fierce conflict with the Greek governments and the conservative political forces of the country and by propagating its own particular symbols and rituals, the left proposed an alternative political identity that clearly referenced the class characteristics of foreign workers, while on the other hand linking the fate of emigrants with that of the labor movement within Greece. The left managed to impose its hegemony in the community and to achieve popular support during the few years that followed the postwar exodus of Greeks up until a short time after the installation of the dictatorial regime in Greece in 1967. Even if the hazard was the political affiliation of those who would return and form part of the Greek working class, the self-organization processes promoted by the left empowered immigrants, endorsed their ability to imagine alternative identities and helped them formulate and claim their demands toward the governments of both sending and host countries.

Although the majority of immigrants were not actively involved in community affairs, the influence of the organized workers reached a lot more Greeks than those who belonged to the community or antidictatorship committees, thus instituting and preserving a collective life, defining and reproducing popular cultural traits and values and supporting networks of separate social relations. They molded the collective aspect of the immigrants' lives and cultivated a sense of belonging, irrespective of the number of registered members of the association.<sup>55</sup>

### *The Fluidity and Unequal Status of Identities*

Postwar Greek emigrants were conscious of their national and religious identity and their specific history and culture. The long wars in which Greece had been involved during the twentieth century and especially the experience of the German occupation

had sharpened their national awareness. At the same time, their national identity had been systematically cultivated by the Greek state and the country's intellectual and political leadership via the primary school—attendance at which was compulsory and free of charge—military service for men, the national commemorations, the public discourse of intellectuals and politicians, and so on.

Yet the national identity, which had been constructed and reshaped through collective experiences, ideological mechanisms and the discourse of leading groups, was neither uniform—especially after the Civil War (1946-1949)—nor static and permanent. In addition to their national identity, the various cultural, social, political and gender groups who lived in Greece or in communities abroad had many other identities as well. These groups did not perceive and evaluate their national identity in the same way nor charge it with the same meaning and emotional weight. Moreover, as Greeks interacted with foreigners and foreign customs—obviously not only through war and other negative experiences—and found or devised differences and similarities, their identity was transformed.

After the war Europe saw the development of many powerful osmotic processes as populations came into contact with increasing numbers of alternative behavioral patterns and foreign value systems. Many mechanisms were developed that promoted the interaction of cultures and the fusion of some traits and products—radio, cinema, tourism, consumer goods and models, etc. By the 1950s even remote rural communities in areas without electricity or roads would be in contact with relatives or fellow villagers who had moved to some big city and were familiar with other ways of living, or with earlier emigrants repatriating from distant countries and bringing with them new habits and values.

However, the familiarization with foreign cultural systems and the ability to incorporate their constituents were not uniform in all social groups. The cultural traits of the homeland's agricultural class—from which most immigrants came—and the host land's working class—into which they were integrated, even if they formed its marginalized sector—were more differentiated locally and nationally, more embedded into everyday practices, and more closely associated with the immediate context in comparison with more privileged and educated social classes. The ex-peasants who had become workers did not have the same pos-

sibilities as middle-class foreigners to cross ethnic boundaries (which were also class boundaries to them), to choose not to display their cultural characteristics or adopt new ones. Immigrants had a limited range of feasible choices as their social background and cultural capital drastically reduced the spectrum of possible alternative identities. The formation, transformation and reproduction of ethnic identity had a powerful class-related aspect to it.<sup>56</sup>

The emigrants left Greece with many elements of their own cultural capital already formed—as were those of other foreigners and the various groups of the indigenous population; certain cultural differences such as language and religion were products of long historical processes. As the past has its weight, their collective identity had been partly constructed before their expatriation on the basis of a common historical course and cultural heritage, partly real and partly invented, while their contact with the local population of the host country and the other foreigners reinforced their self-awareness.<sup>57</sup> The common experience of emigration, working in the mines, living conditions and their new social status initially diminished the importance of the pre-existing cultural and political heterogeneity among Greek workers and decisively promoted the processes of identification with one another. Due to the stigmatization they suffered, immigrants also came to perceive themselves as a distinct group living under adverse conditions due to the fact that they were foreigners with a different culture.<sup>58</sup> Given their intention to repatriate, many immigrants had every reason to preserve their language and the ingredients of their cultural capital; after all, a significant percentage did indeed return.

Furthermore, certain social forces in the host country, some institutions of the sending society and some groups of expatriates worked—all for different reasons, of course—to preserve and/or devise cultural peculiarities and construct a uniform ethnic identity; however, their different motives led to contradictions and conflicts in their discourses and practices. The social and political oppositions among Greeks in Belgium often obstructed or precluded the success of these efforts and the achievement of a consensus about the way to organize the differences and similarities. Thus, in addition to ethnic identity, the Greek sections of Belgian unions and the left-wing elements acting within the communities formed alternative political and class identities. They magnified

the breaches within the ethnic group by emphasizing social differences and political dissent, and favored contact among foreigners as well as between foreign and indigenous workers. In this way they obstructed consent and a uniform expression and representation of the ethnic group, while they incited the processes for the immigrants' social and cultural integration in the host country.

On the other hand, the individualistic dream of prosperity and social advancement, which had long eroded the rural communities of the sending countries, was an incentive for immigrants to conform to the standards of the host society. The international conjuncture in the decades after the Second World War favored the integration of southern European immigrants in the labor markets of Western Europe—even if in disadvantaged occupational locations—and allowed them to take advantage, if unequally, of the overall prosperity, the conquests of the working class and the benefits of the welfare state before circumstances changed. The work in mines or factories, with its different time management and discipline, the educational system, which promoted systematic learning of the language and the instillation of the host society's cultural codes in children, the mentality cultivated by the welfare state, the new models of consumption, the syndicates and the media exerted powerful pressures for the adoption of behaviors and values that prevailed in the host country in order to increase productivity and consumption and achieve the smooth functioning of its structures or the unity of the working class. The policy of the Belgian state also changed over time, gradually adopting measures—often fragmentary—to facilitate the integration of immigrants and their children.<sup>59</sup> So there coexisted in the host country forms of social relations, groups and institutions that favored the forging and perpetuation of cultural peculiarities, ethnic identities and their unequal evaluation, with collective subjects, social strategies and structures pressing for assimilation or the creolization of cultural systems and identities.

After all, the picture of closed, static cultural systems that came into sudden, violent contact with one another does not reflect the conditions of postwar migration. Cultural diversity—at least at the time and in the geographical area under consideration—was a continuum. Cultures contained contradictory ingredients and values and were not as cohesive as they are often pictured; they were malleable, without fixed forms, with porous boundaries, but

also of unequal prestige and influence.<sup>60</sup> The immigrants' cultural systems combined fragments from the traditional culture of the sending country's rural populations and urbanized popular groups with cultural elements of the host country's working class, of the immigrants from other countries with the mass culture of western societies. They were neither "traditional" nor identical with the culture of the sending society, which was not uniform in any case. They were not juxtaposed to modernization or to an illusory uniform and cohesive culture of the host society; rather, they formed a continuum with them, contained various contradictory elements and shreds of continuity and change and were transformed through interaction.

Last, but not least, the continual repositioning of the boundaries of difference, the shifting hierarchies of others and the alliance against the third person—the Muslim—the dynamics of certain international and social relations functioned in these historical junctures in such a way as to lead to the simultaneous emergence of new, broader identities—that of the "Mediterranean" or the "European" identity—and hybrid systems of values and behavioral codes.<sup>61</sup>

By reconstructing aspects of the history of the Greek working-class immigrants in postwar Belgium, this article focused on the relational, dynamic and contingent character of community and identity formation processes. As analyzed above, the unequal relations between indigenous population and migrant groups evolved within the social system and the institutions of the host country. Since the initial categorization of immigrants as foreigners was used by the dominant social groups to prevent their access to sources of wealth and power, the identity of a foreigner was inevitably used as a basis for resistance against this dominance.<sup>62</sup> Organization on the basis of ethnic criteria was one of the ways in which immigrants managed the fear caused by change, the unknown and social exclusion. Heritage and identities functioned as a base for the shaping of forms of social solidarity and networks of mutual aid; in other words, they formed part of specific practices and relations that were vital for their survival.<sup>63</sup> The pre-existing or new differences were turned into identity markers of new social subjects—and acquired social significance as they were interlinked through stigmatization and the effort to overcome it—with the exclusion and conflicts to which this led.<sup>64</sup> Thus, the

invocation of distinct ethnic identities was not a natural product of different traditions but a result of the discriminations and the stigmatization foreign workers had to deal with in the host societies.

Furthermore, identities, ethnic networks and practices were constantly remolded; they were transformed through the immigrants' relations with networks in the home country, other networks in the host country and with the national population as well as through the new social experiences. Identities and community practices were reforged through the interaction between the state policies, social structures, class oppositions and cultural patterns of the sending and the host country, the complicated relations of immigrants with the national population or the immigrants among themselves but also as a function of international relations and the unequal power of states.

Just like cultural systems, social and ethnic identities were neither uniform nor static; they were multiple, amorphous and hybrid. Yet construction, reproduction and mutation of identities is dependent on international and social power differentials. A group's ability to define its self-image or to impose an other-definition depends on its relative power in the economic and political as well as the symbolic realm. The foreign workers' changing identities and hybrid cultural systems lacked the prestige and legitimacy of those of the dominant social groups in Western Europe. The cumulative effect of their status as foreigners and their social background and position limited the immigrants' potential to claim recognition and legitimization of their identities and hence to direct the transformation processes of their cultural characteristics.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>St. Hall, "Introduction: Who Needs 'Identity'?" in St. Hall and P. du Gay, eds., *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1996), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>V. Kotzamanis, "Le mouvement migratoire dans la Grèce de l'après-guerre. Antécédants migratoires, mécanismes 'libérateurs' et conditions permissives au départ durant les années cinquante/soixante-dix," doctoral thesis (Université Paris X, Nanterre, 1987), pp. 92, 96, 110.

<sup>3</sup>Συμφωνία μεταξύ της Ελλάδος και του Βελγίου αφορώσα εις μετανάστευσις εις Βέλγιον ελλήνων εργατών δι' απασχόλησιν εις τα ανθρακωρυχεία. July 1957. This is the only bilateral agreement signed by Belgium dealing with the exclusive recruitment of coal miners.

<sup>4</sup>Fédéchar Archives, files 8/6/D 3 and 8/5/D 4; Institut National de Statistique, December 31, 1970. *Recensement de la population*, vol. 4, *Population selon la nationalité, A. Royaume, provinces, arrondissements et régions linguistiques* (Brussels, 1974).

<sup>5</sup>L. Venturas, Έλληνες μετανάστες στο Βέλγιο (Athens: Nefeli, 1999), pp. 79-84, 173-175, 183-185; interviews with ex-miners in Belgium: A. Karapiperis January 2, 1995; E. Katsaras July 19, 1994; D. Pachatouridis July 13, 1994 and July 20, 1994; A. Tsimopoulos July 6, 1994 and July 14, 1994.

<sup>6</sup>In 1961, 41.8 percent of the Greeks in Belgium were women; 1961 Belgian census.

<sup>7</sup>1981 Belgian census. For more information see: W. De Lannoy, J.P. Grimmeau, C. Kesteloot, "La population de nationalité étrangère à Bruxelles-Capitale," in J.P. Grimmeau, ed., *Les étrangers en Belgique d'après les recensements* (Brussels: Institut National de Statistique, 1991), pp. 91, 93.

<sup>8</sup>In 1970, 27 percent and in 1981, 32 percent of Greek women in Belgium were working; 1970 and 1981 Belgian census.

<sup>9</sup>Interviews with Greek immigrants in Belgium. Men: V. Kolokouris October 28, 1994; M. Koukouvas July 6, 1995; women: E. Karapiperi January 2, 1995; S. Stratidi December 28, 1994.

<sup>10</sup>Institut National de Statistique, March 1, 1981. *Recensement de la population*, vol. 4, *Population selon la nationalité, A. Royaume, régions, provinces, arrondissements* (Brussels, n.d.).

<sup>11</sup>Interviews with Greek immigrants in Belgium: G. Drakoulas October 25, 1994; A. Karapiperis January 2, 1995; P. Kosmidis July 19, 1994; M. Maroulis July 4, 1995. See also A. Dimitrakopoulos, "Profils de l'immigration grecque en Belgique. Analyse comparative de deux générations d'immigrés," dissertation (Université Catholique de Louvain, 1990), pp. 64-65.

<sup>12</sup>Immigrants who arrived in Belgium during the 1950s obtained a work permit exclusively for the coal mines, in which they had to work for at least five years before they could apply for work permits in other industries. In the 1960s the period of compulsory employment in the mines was reduced as the mines gradually closed down and demand for factory workers increased. M. Vincineau, "Les traités bilatéraux relatifs à l'emploi et au séjour en Belgique des travailleurs immigrés," *Lire l'immigration* 2 (1984).

<sup>13</sup>Testimonies to be found in E. Dimitras, *Enquêtes sociologiques sur les émigrants grecs*, vol. B, *Lors du séjour en Europe occidentale* (Athens: EKKE, 1971); On similar experiences of Greek immigrants in Germany see E. Kolodny, Η Σαμποθράκη σης όχθες του Νέκαρ. Έλληνες μετανάστες στη Στουτγάρδη (Athens: EKKE, 1985).

<sup>14</sup>From 1967 the right of immigrants' children to automatically obtain work permits was abolished for some categories of foreigners, while unemployed immigrants with a certain type of work permit were only eligible for unemployment benefits until the expiration of their work permits, after which they would be deported. A. Martens, *Les immigrés. Flux et reflux d'une main-d'oeuvre*

*d'appoint. La politique belge de l'immigration de 1945 à 1970* (Louvain: Vie Ouvrière—Presses Universitaires de Louvain, 1976), pp. 147-148.

<sup>15</sup>A. Rea, "Mouvements sociaux, partis et intégration", in M.-Th. Coenen, R. Lewin, eds., *La Belgique et ses immigrés. Les politiques manquées* (Brussels: De Boeck, 1997), pp. 48-50.

<sup>16</sup>Martens, pp. 149-152.

<sup>17</sup>M. Vandemeulebrouke, "Sous le regard des médias," in Coenen and Lewin, eds., pp. 205-220.

<sup>18</sup>S. Basch, *Le mirage grec. La Grèce moderne devant l'opinion française (1846-1946)* (Athens: Hatier, 1995), pp. 324, 337, 394.

<sup>19</sup>The number of Belgian tourists in Greece grew from about five hundred at the beginning of the 1950s to over eleven thousand in 1962. Annual reports of the Belgian ambassador in Athens to the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Archives of the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Grèce—Dossiers 1953-1965*. Also indicative of the increasing numbers of Belgian travelers to Greece in the 1950s is the establishment of travel agencies specializing in organizing holidays in Greece and a branch of the Greek National Tourist Organization in Brussels.

<sup>20</sup>M. Herzfeld, *Anthropology through the Looking-glass: Critical Ethnography in the Margins of Europe* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 3.

<sup>21</sup>K. Ross, *Aller plus vite, laver plus blanc. La culture française au tournant des années soixante* (Paris: Abbeville, 1997), pp. 70-72, 95, 146. Characteristically, even the anthropological study of southern Europe by western scientists in the 1960s chose to investigate isolated rural communities, thus reinforcing the perception of static agricultural societies, rather than the multiple social changes in urban centers and the planned ruptures with the past that were rapidly transforming the Mediterranean countries. S. Woolf, "Introduction" in S. Woolf, ed., *Espaces et familles dans l'Europe du Sud à l'âge moderne* (Paris: Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1993), pp. 8-9, 14-15.

<sup>22</sup>These are the films *Never on a Sunday* (1960) and *Zorba the Greek* (1964), the music of Hadjidakis and Theodorakis and the novels of Kazantzakis.

<sup>23</sup>The Italian immigrants were the first to arrive in Belgium after the war (the Belgo-Italian migration agreement was signed in 1946). The Spanish and the Greeks arrived en masse after 1956. The Moroccans and the Turks arrived after 1964. In 1970, the Italians made up 41 percent of Belgium's foreign population, the Spanish 12.2 percent, the Moroccans 9.9 percent, the Turks 8.1 percent and the Greeks 3.4 percent. Commissariat Royal à la Politique des Immigrés, *L'intégration: une politique de longue haleine*, vol. 1, *Repères et premières propositions* (Brussels, 1989), p. 19.

<sup>24</sup>Vandemeulebrouke, "Sous le regard des médias," p. 205.

<sup>25</sup>Greek emigration to Belgian coal mines was initiated by M. Kokkinos, who was of Dodecanesian descent. This, and the operation of local networks, explains the early and significant presence of Dodecanesians in Belgium.

<sup>26</sup>A. Morelli, "L'appel à la main d'oeuvre italienne pour les charbonnages et sa prise en charge à son arrivée en Belgique dans l'immediat après-guerre," *Revue Belge d'Histoire Contemporaine* 19:1-2 (1988): 83-130.

<sup>27</sup>See articles comparing the situation of Greek and Italian immigrants in the newspaper of the Greek section of the Christian Syndicate in Belgium Πρωτοπόρος, November 1965, p. 2, and January 1967, p. 3.

<sup>28</sup>See note 25. The Italian migrants were not only the largest ethnic group working in the coal mines apart from the Belgians, but also—up to 1956—the only one protected by a bilateral migration agreement.

<sup>29</sup>Testimonies on the Belgian society's enmity and stereotypes for Italian immigrants were published in a special feature of the newspaper *Le Soir* on June 18, 1996.

<sup>30</sup>Dimitras, p. 122.

<sup>31</sup>Interviews with Greek immigrants in Belgium: A. Karapiperis, January 2, 1995; I. Koutenakis, July 6, 1995; P. Kosmidis, July 19, 1994.

<sup>32</sup>See note 25.

<sup>33</sup>See: J. Billiet, A. Carton and R. Huys, *Inconnus ou malaimés? Une enquête sociologique sur l'attitude des Belges à l'égard des immigrants*, polygraphed study (Louvain, 1990); E. Roosens, "The Multicultural Nature of Contemporary Belgian Society: The Immigrant Community," in A. Lijphart, ed., *Conflict and Coexistence in Belgium: The Dynamics of a Culturally Divided Society* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1981), pp. 61-92; O. De Biolley, *La vie politique des communes bruxelloises. L'argument immigré dans les campagnes communales (1970-1988)* (L.L.N.: Academia, 1994); M. Vandemeulebroucke, "Sous le regard des médias." For this process in the US see St. Castles and A. Davidson, *Citizenship and Migration: Globalization and the Politics of Belonging* (New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 99.

<sup>34</sup>Excerpt from an interview with S. Stratidi, a Greek woman immigrant in Belgium, December 28, 1994.

<sup>35</sup>Document 555/B/1, dated March 29, 1956, sent by the Greek embassy in Brussels to Fédéchar. Fédéchar Archives, file 28/5/0 1.

<sup>36</sup>Πρωτοπόρος (September 1968), p.2; interview with the Most Reverend Metropolitan of Belgium, July 12, 1994.

<sup>37</sup>Article with the title "On Marriage," by Dean Emilianos Timiadis, included in the publication *Ta Néa Μας*, which was published on Easter of 1956 in Brussels. S. Kokkinos Archive.

<sup>38</sup>Until the mass settlement of immigrants, apart from the dominant Catholic Church, the Belgian state officially recognized the Protestant and Anglican churches and the Jewish religion. In addition to legal status and prestige, the recognition of a church or doctrine had very concrete material benefits: the state or municipal authorities paid the wages of religious ministers—as well as their representatives who visited prisons, hospitals, etc.—and contributed to the erection and maintenance of religious buildings. At the same time, public schools at all levels of compulsory education were obliged to have classes for all recognized religious doctrines alongside those of secularized ethics.

<sup>39</sup>The publication of a Greek-language newspaper started in 1959. In 1964 the mimeographed paper was replaced with a monthly printed publication, *Πρωτοπόρος*, which was published regularly from then on.

<sup>40</sup>In 1968, according to syndicate data, 38 percent of all Greek workers were members of the Christian syndicate. In 1967 there were about one hundred Greek union militants in this syndicate; *Πρωτοπόρος* (April 1967), pp. 1-2. In the same decade the socialist syndicate also had many members, although we do not have any figures.

<sup>41</sup>For example, the newspaper of the Greek section of the Christian Syndicate, *Πρωτοπόρος*, frequently published articles promoting a change of child-rearing practices and the role of women in family life, work and society. See, for example, *Πρωτοπόρος* (March 1968), p. 2; (May 1968), p. 2; (October 1968), p. 2; (March 1969), p. 2; (February 1970), p. 2.

<sup>42</sup>In 1947 the Belgian census counted only 1,270 Greek citizens; there was, however, a small but unknown number of naturalized Belgians of Greek origin and some Orthodox speakers of Greek of Turkish or other citizenships. The first evidence of organized Greek presence in Belgium is, as far as I know, from 1900, when the first Greek Orthodox church was founded in the port of Antwerp. A Greek community was established in the city in 1911. A society called "Sisterhood of Greek Ladies" was set up in Brussels in 1926, with the main aim of setting up and operating a Greek Orthodox church in the city. The sisterhood's aim was achieved in 1933, when a church was inaugurated in the Belgian capital. For more information see: V. Karamanolakis and L. Venturas, "Μετασχηματισμοί των ελληνικών παροικιών της Δυτικής Ευρώπης στον 20ό αιώνα: Οι μετανάστες στο Βέλγιο," *Τα Ιστορικά* 14:27 (1997): 391-408, and L. Venturas, *op. cit.*, pp. 103-126.

<sup>43</sup>Interview on October 21, 1994 with J. Jianneridis, responsible for the Greek section of the Belgian Christian Syndicate from 1958 to 1980. See also *Πρωτοπόρος* (January 1971), p. 2; a correspondence from Belgium in the newspaper *Ἔθνος* (August 8, 1956), which states that many expatriates believed that a coalminer's job was not fitting for Greeks and tried to "set themselves apart from their breadwinner compatriots." A similar testimony can be found in a letter of M. Kokkinos, organizer of Greek emigration to Belgium, to the Greek Ministry of Labor, January 14, 1956, *Fédéchar Archives*, file 8/6/D 3.

<sup>44</sup>Report of GCB chairman D. Dimitrakopoulos to C. Karamanlis, April 3, 1962; Greek Community of Brussels Archives (GCBA). My emphasis.

<sup>45</sup>Letter of GCB chairman D. Dimitrakopoulos to E. Flokos, Labor Attaché of Greece in Germany, May 22, 1962, with whom they were friends. GCBA. My emphasis.

<sup>46</sup>See documents and letters from the administrative council of the community written between 1962 and 1964 to coal mines, social security organizations, consular authorities and Greek government officials; GCBA.

<sup>47</sup>Invitation in French to the community's general assembly of December 3, 1964, with the agenda including the proposed changes in the charter articles regarding the enrolment of new members; GCBA.

<sup>48</sup>The demographic and social information on the members of the Greek Community of Brussels, as seen in membership records from the years 1963 and 1967, confirm the radical changes in the social composition of the community. The information on the records allows one to form a relatively full picture of the new members' social profile. The community was still an almost exclusively male social arena. Eighty-five percent of the male members who had filled in the records were laborers, and 7 percent technical and skilled workers. GCBA.

<sup>49</sup>In 1964, P. Nefeloudis, responsible for the EDA organizations in Western Europe, urged local officials toward this aim and helped them draft a proposal for an amendment of the community charter that would allow the enrolment of all Greeks in Brussels; interview with D. Pahatouridis, a left-wing

immigrant in Belgium, July 13 and 20, 1994.

<sup>50</sup>Πρακτικόν των αποτελεσμάτων των αρχαιρεσιών της 28ης Νοεμβρίου 1965; GCBA.

<sup>51</sup>See the newspaper *Η Πατρίδα*, published by EDA for expatriate Greeks from February 1966 until the enforcement of the dictatorship. *Η Πατρίδα* (February 23, 1966), pp. 3, 5 and (April 18, 1966), p. 8.

<sup>52</sup>See documents, proclamations, reports, etc., from the 1965-1974 period; GCBA and *Η Πατρίδα* (May 18, 1966), p. 8 and (February 6, 1967), p. 5.

<sup>53</sup>Leaflets, invitations, clippings from Belgian newspapers, final financial reports of the administrative council, 1950-1975. Archives of the Sisterhood of Greek Ladies and GCBA.

<sup>54</sup>Letter of GCB chairman D. Dimitrakopoulos to E. Flokos, Labor Attaché of Greece in Germany, May 22, 1963. GCBA. My emphasis.

<sup>55</sup>On working-class and migrant associations we were inspired by the analyses of the following: V.L. Lidtke, *The Alternative Culture: Socialist Labor in Imperial Germany* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); J. Rex, D. Joly and C. Wilpert, eds., *Immigrant Associations in Europe* (Aldershot, Brookfield, Gower, 1987); G.B. Cohen, "Organizational Patterns of the Urban Ethnic Groups," in M. Engman et al., eds., *Ethnic Identity in Urban Europe* (New York: New York University Press, 1992), pp. 407-418; M.-A. Hily and M. Poinard, "Fonctions et enjeux du mouvement associatif portugais en France," *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales* 1:1 (1985): 25-35; J. Fijalkowski, "Solidarités intra-communautaires et formations d'associations au sein de la population étrangère d'Allemagne," *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales* 10:1 (1994): 33-55; N. Green, "Juifs et Noirs aux Etats-Unis. La rupture d'une 'alliance naturelle,'" *Annales ESC* 2 (1987): 445-464.

<sup>56</sup>G. Cohen, "Ethnic Persistence and Change: Concepts and Models for Historical Research," *Social Science Quarterly* 65:4 (1984): 1029-1042; Ph. Poutignat and J. Streiff-Fenart, *Théories de l'ethnicité* (Paris: PUF, 1995), pp. 144-149; F. Anthias, *Ethnicity, Class, Gender and Migration: Greek-Cypriots in Britain* (Aldershot, Brookfield, Avebury, 1992), p. 135.

<sup>57</sup>Poutignat and Streiff-Fenart, p. 179; H. Vermeulen and C. Govers, eds., *The Anthropology of Ethnicity: Beyond "Ethnic Groups and Boundaries"* (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 1994), p. 69.

<sup>58</sup>C.G. Pooley, "The Role of Migration in the Development of Non-dominant Ethnic Groups in Europe, 1850-1940," in Engman et al., eds., p. 359.

<sup>59</sup>A. Bastenier, *L'Etat belge face à l'immigration: Les politiques sociales jusqu'en 1980* (LLN, Academia, 1992).

<sup>60</sup>S. Castles, H. Booth and T. Wallace, *Here for Good: Western Europe's New Ethnic Minorities* (London and Sydney: Pluto Press, 1984), p. 164; Vermeulen and Govers, eds., pp. 14, 30.

<sup>61</sup>For the notions of the repositioning of boundaries of difference and the shifting hierarchies of others, see St. Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in J. Rutherford, ed., *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), p. 227; and C.B. Brettell, "Theorizing Migration in Anthropology," in C.B. Brettell and J.F. Hollifield, eds., *Migration Theory: Talking across Disciplines* (New York and London: Routledge, 2000), p. 115.

<sup>62</sup>L. Venturas, Μετανάστευση και έθνος. Μετασηματισμοί στις συλ-

λογικόητες και τις κοινωνικές θέσεις (Athens: EMNE, 1994), p. 89.

<sup>63</sup>Almost all Greek immigrants to Belgium we interviewed mentioned the crucial role of ethnic networks in finding jobs after leaving the mines, finding accommodation, becoming familiar with new ways to save money, manage coffee shops, restaurants, grocery stores, etc. The financial value of ethnic networks was crucial for all those who lacked the skills and knowledge valued by the host society.

<sup>64</sup>G.B. Cohen, "Organizational Patterns of the Urban Ethnic Groups," in Engman et al., eds., pp. 407-418.

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