"Crossing borders: limits and 'spaces' for mobility of migrant populations"

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Abstract:

On the basis of empirical data accumulated over the years through EKKE's research projects on the immigration question, this paper attempts to show the different aspects of the 'technical' borders which migrant populations have to transcend or overcome in their venture seeking a new way of life; such are the borders of regulations, the fences of civilisations and cultures, the frontiers of rules and regulations, limits and contraints imposed upon migrants' living conditions and employment. On the basis of data from the Greek experience one might be able to understand the different kinds and levels of mobility of migrant populations not only through the mere passing of the frontiers of the Greek State but also within the Greek social formation and transformation especially in the midst of the present economic crisis.

The present paper attempts to unravel the consequences of a 'sui generis' social mobility of migrant populations within the host society which challenges the taken-for-granted theoretical explanatory assumptions of upward or downward of social mobility. Epistemologically speaking, a conceptual vaccuum is depicted in the operationalisation of the sui generis mobility and social position of the migrant populations as they are usually moving through limits and borders of two or even plenty geographical and social spaces. The relevant epistemological dilemmas which are unearthed during the social process of the migratory experience might be resolved by means of use or even 'invention' of the so-called 'intermediate concepts' suitable to discover the 'limbo' case of the social position of the migrant populations in the social hierarchy which are equally epistemologically sound as the dominant paradigms of social stratification and mobility.

Introduction

The basic idea of the present paper has originated from the *'real fact'* that populations are crossing geographical borders and state frontiers moving around the world from times immemorial. Entering to the era of modernity the *'real fact'* of travelling populations in time and space was transformed by the world of ideas to the *'social fact'* of migration. Thus, the "*transition of an inidividual or social object or value ... from one social position to another*"[1] , that is what sociologists mean by the

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[1] Sorokin P. A. (1927), pg. 133.

concept of *"social mobility"* , has been a topic of major interest among social scientists since the time of Durkheim.

Migration in terms of mobility, however, apart from the natural fact of the physical movement of persons or groups of persons from place to place, from one country (of origin) to another (of destination), from one social formation, that of departure, to the social formation of the "*host society*" has attracted limited scientific attention. While the *pragmatic* aspects of the notion of migrant's mobility, the sociological thinking has produced limited accounts of knowledge as to the social position of migrants into the host society.

Traditionally, much of the scientific interest to the concept of *social mobility* and the related concept of *social stratification* have attracted much attention, as both concepts are developing an understanding of class reproduction, with social mobility being seen as a vital key to social structure and the processes underlying class formation.[2] Estimates and explanations, however, of the incidence of the social mobility (upward or downward) of individuals or social groups *detached* from one social formation and *attached* to another it has been difficult to obtain. This issue becomes even more perplexing if one considers that all moving populations belonged one way or another to some social stratum or srata of their society of origin. Things become even more difficult in cases where studies of the social stratification system of the host society are absent as in the case of Greece.

As a result, the migration question is usually treated in contemporary social sciences literature as an issue of "boundaries and margins", as an issue of "integrations and exclusions".[3] In the absence of empirical research, there has been much theoretical speculation concerning the effects which social mobility may have on migrant and host populations, at both, the societal and the individual levels.This is particularly true for the Greek case where studies on "how many classes exist in Greek society" are non-existent. This, of course, by no means implies that Greeks live into a *classless society*[4] but it is an additional proof of the epistemological difficulty of such a scientific task.

Difficult as it might be, it is in the scope of the present paper to attempt to place a finger upon the thought of migrants' stratification and mobility and provide some ideas on the difficulty to resolve the relevant epistemological challenges and dilemmas.

Basic concepts and ideas revisited

The epistemological grounds of the pioneering thought of stratification and mobility need some kind of travelling back in time and space. It would take a limited amount of time to recall for example that from the root word *strata* Parsons developed

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[2] Indicatevelly, Goldthorpe J. H. (1980).
[3] See indicatevelly, Kaftatzoglou R., Petronoti M., (2000).

[4] For reasons of economy it is not possible to reproduce the relevant literature here. Extended bibliography is cited in Tsiganou J., (1998), pg. 391-401. Yet, one must recognise the successful attempts made by social scientists in Greece to built upon the concept of the social stratification of the Greek society which, nevertheless, are reffering to segments of the population. See indicatevely, Moskof K., (1972), Filias V., (1974), Tsoukalas K., (1975), Petmezidou – Tsoulouvi M., (1987), Moschonas A., (1986), Georgoulas A., (1997), Kasimati K., (2001). Recent data and analyses of migrants integration are provided in Ventoura L., (2011), Kasimis Ch., Paradoloulos A., (2012), Petrou M., (2014), pg. 311-356.

"an analytical approach to the theory of social stratification".[5] Numerous scientists in the decades that followed amalgamating also Marxist and Weberian ideas came to recognise that social stratification refers to a ranking of people or groups of people within a society; a social division which implies some form of legitimation of the ranking of people and the unequal distribution of valued goods, services and prestige through belief systems justifying the inequality and unequal ranking. As Parsons very succinctly has put it criticizing Sorokin's ideas on 'social mobility'[6] *"ranking is one of many possible bases on which individuals may be differentiated. It is only in so far as differences are treated as involving or related to particular kinds of social superiority and inferiority that they are relevant to the theory of stratification".*[7]

In the absence of adequate empirical verification of the above assumptions the relevant theoretical speculation in the long run of abstract theorizing has led to the identification of two major hypotheses in the literature: the alienation or marginality thesis and the acculturation thesis.[8] The majority of theorists have favoured some version of the alienation hypothesis and the consensus view is that any change in social class is likely to have negative consequences not only for society but also for the individual resulting in a decrease in the intimacy of social and family relationships and bringing psychological stress and adjustment problems.[9]

Turning to the question of "human migration" in Park's words[10] a strong individualistic vein of explanation is prominent. Park defines marginality *as a state of limbo* between at least two cultural life-worlds. The marginal person, having taken on elements of the dominant culture, also is unable to return unchanged to his/her original group and therefore is caught in a structure of *double ambivalence, unable either to leave or to return to the original group; unable either to merge with the new group or to slough it off.* [11] These are precisely the terms to lifting the marginality thesis from the terms of distance and nearness that characterize Simmel's *"stranger"*,[12] an individual who is simultaneously near and far, who comes today and stays tomorrow.[13]

The concept of marginality played a historical role in sociological thinking. However, the term's original lack of precision has led to a confusing usage.[14] The empirical consequence of the confusion of *one marginal position* with the *structure of marginality* is that many types of reactions of marginal persons to their social situation go undistinguished and unexplained.[15] Help is not provided neither through the more elaborate version of Park's "Marginal Man" by Stonequist.[16]

Followingly, in the tradition of social roles theory, Hughes conceptualises marginality not only as a merged product of racial and cultural qualities but of social mobility as well. He also extended the concept to include almost any situation in which a person identifies at least partially with two status or reference groups but is

[5] Parsons T., (1940).
[6] Sorokin P. A., (1927).
[7] Parsons, 1940, ibid., pg. 841-2.
[8] See review in Kasimati K. (2001). Also, Ashford Sh., (1988).
[9]Ashford Sh., (1988), ibid, pg. 25-26. Also, Durkheim E., (1897, 1952), Sorokin (1927), Warner W. L. (1937, 1963), Tumin M. M. (1967), Janowitz M., (1956), Kohn M.L. (1969, 1977), Blau P. M., (1956).
[10] Park R., (1928).
[11] Weisberger A., (1992), pg. 425.
[12] Simmel G., (1971).
[13] Scholem G., (1976), pg. 205.
[14] Mancini - Billson J. (1988), pg. 183.
[15] Weisberger A., (1992), pg. 428-9.
[16] Stonequist, (1937).

not accepted totally by either.[17] The phenomenon of marginality, defined in this broader sense appears to be one in which many of us are apt to participate given our highly mobile and heterogenious society.[18] Even Merton considered marginality to be a specific case of reference group theory.[19]

However, the classical conceptualisation of marginality although promoted as an omnibus term must be applied carefully and only after its parameters are specified since *"by including everything includes nothing"*.[20] More contemporary writings on marginality clearly influenced by Marxists' conflict analyses have stressed the structural marginality of disenfranchised populations within societies whose lack of access to the means of production and the mainstream's reward system result in perpetuation of poverty and powerlessness. But, even in this case *"many of its manifestations and imlications for social processes are similar to those of cultural and social role marginality"*.[21] Yet, a marginal situation may not be anxiety-producing for the individual involved.[22] Also, marginal situations may range from the trivial to life-determining, from the temporary to more permanent, from the individual to societal, even global.[23] Thus, to make the idea of marginality concrete, one must identify the actual features of particular instances of marginality, such as in the case of clashing cultures or the historical conditions responsible for their meeting and the resulting reconstructions.[24]

It becomes obvious from the above that discussions of marginality and the social characteristics of the stranger often assume a distinction between a stronger and a weaker party, a host and a (desired or undesired) guest. The relationship between the two cultures is not one of reciprocal and mutual conditioning. Further it is assumed that marginal persons ambivalently associated with their native group and ambivalently drawn to the host group conceive different strategies of adaptation in order to find a resolution to their subordination and the contrary influences to which they are exposed. These modes of adaptation have been conceived either in the form of "directions of marginality"[25] or in the form of the "dimensions of marginality".[26] Even the rational choice models which are based on methodological individualism have tried to explain the degree to which individuals from minority ethnic groups can reformulate their identities in order to take advantage of opportunities denied their group. But if identities were as plastic as rational theories have assumed marginal populations should disappear. Research has shown however, that marginal groups do not disappear as the outcome of individual identity reformulations in the macro-level.[27]

Yet, historical data have confirmed the hypothesis that key individuals may not serve as *cultural brokers*[28] since they would find it economically harmful to escape from social marginality.[29] Furthermore, empirical evidence has shown that for

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[17] Hughes E. C., (1945).
[18] Hughes E. C., (1949), Dewey G. J., (1970), Tiryakian E. A., (1973).
[19] As cited in Mancini - Billson J. (1988), pg. 188.
[20] Green A. W., (1947), pg. 168.
[21] Mancini - Billson J. (1988), pg. 189.
[22] Campbell V., (1980).
[23] Mancini - Billson J. (1988), pg. 190.
[24] Weisberger A., (1992), pg. 430.
[25] Weisberger A., (1992), pg. 432.
[26] Mancini - Billson J. (1988), pg. 190.
[27] Laitin D., (1995).
[28] Indicatevily, Szasz, M.C., (2001).
[29] Laitin D., (1995), pg. 43.

someone to be assimilated it means that sufficient changes have been made in one's public appearance so that dominant people under normal conditions consider that person as a member of their society in all important aspects of social life. The choice to assimilate then is in fact an amalgama of choices to be part of the dominant cultural group in society.[30] The process of assimilation is also full of ambiguities. Bauman has exhibited the way the very process of assimilation creates new barriers between the dominant society and the assimilating populations.[31] In this vein, Barth's conceptualisation of the content of culture as contingent and fluid[32] seems a promising resolution of the assimilation dilemma

Thus, literature has treated the issue of the social position of the migrants in the host society either in terms of "insiders" and "outsiders", or in vague terms of superordinate and subordinate social positions in the social hierarchy of the host society or even in terms of assimilative "side by side" social locations and placements. A common trait is evidenced in all paradigms. The migrant populations are living in an *unstratified* - so to speak - *state of limbo* - that is either in the case they are considered *strangers or outcasts* or in the case they are considered *marginal populations* with seldom reference to the social *space* occupied by the *margin*. This issue becomes more important if one considers the discussion advanced during the past decade or so at EU and national levels for the social integration of immigrants. However, the relevant discussion is exhausted in deciphering the difference between *'integration'* and *'inclusion'*. As the Greek case bears witness research attempts but seldom seem to consider the social position of migrants in the Greek society as self-evident. Parsons' particular concern in relation to *any uncritical use of such concepts as 'social space'* and *'social distance'* has usually been neglected.[33] As a result, speculative assumptions are often enough considered as self-proven facts.

The Greek experience

In Greece there has been much theoretical speculation concerning the effects which social mobility may have at the societal and the individual levels in a society with continuous migration flows from 1990 onwards. Crossing natural geographically determined frontiers but also 'technical' that is 'naturalised' State borders the moving populations are met with a variety of constrains. In this way, the geographical 'open spaces', by definion, are transformed to closed 'loci', that is, to restrained spaces for travelling migrants settlement and living. Of course such developments are not Greek prerogative but are met to a number of social formations globally.

On the basis of empirical data accumulated over the years through EKKE's[34] research projects on the immigration question[35], the present attempt aims at showing

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[30] Laitin D., (1995), pg. 35.
[31] Bauman Z., (1988).
[32] Barth F., (1969).
[33] Parsons, (1940), pg. 842.
[34] The acronym stands for the "National Centre for Social Research", Athens, Greece.
[35] See indicatively: Research Projects: "Athens and Migration 2005-7", Areas of Excellence/GGET Action 3.3.1., (Tsiganou J., Project Leader and Co-coordinator). "Women's Migration into Greece", Action 2.1. /09, European Integration Fund 2011, Ministry of Interior, (Tsiganou J., Project Leader and Co-coordinator). "Mapping existing structures and services for the social integration of immigrants", Action 2.1. /11, European Integration Fund 2013, Ministry of Interior, (Tsiganou J., Project Leader and Co-coordinator). "Meta-analysis of Studies on Migration", Action 2.1.b/11, European Integration Fund 2013, Ministry of Interior, (Balourdos D., Tsiganou J., Project Leaders and Co-coordinators). "Combating Discrimination in the Field of Entrepreneurship: Women and young Roma and Muslim

the different aspects of the 'technical' boarders which migrant populations have to cross in their settlement within the boundaries of the Greek society. Further, building upon data from the Greek experience one might be able to understand the different kinds and levels of mobility of migrant populations not only through the mere passing of the frontiers of the Greek State but also within the Greek social formation and transformation especially in the midst of the present economic crisis.

Migrant flows are not characterized by any type of homogeneity. Greece has witnessed migratory waves from a number of European, Asian, African countries, countries of the former Soviet Union or others being hitherto EU Member States. The data suggest that the country of origin in the process of crossing geographical and technical frontiers is important. Appearances also deeply matter. In crossing borders the migrant experiences differ for immigrants from European, Asian or African countries, depending on ethnicity and country of origin.

Mobility - in actual and scientific terms - is not a common experience for all migrant populations. Legal entrance and stay in Greece is much affected not only by the means and ways of the motivation and the natural arrival of the migrant person into the country but also by the *status* of the migrant person. That is it depends on its *status label,* as a refugee, an asylum seeker or an economic migrant. Here lies the strong but often disregarded relation of the migrant persons mobility and status ('achieved' or 'ascribed'[36] depending on the stratification system of the country of origin and the social position of the migrant person within this system). Mobility is also affected by the contacts, resources (material capital, cultural and symbolic assets) held by the migrant populations. It also depends on the means and ways used to certify legal entrance and stay in the host country that is an issue of lawful documentation or undocumented migration.

Exploring the experience of embankment into the host country a little further, it is evidenced that for the majority of migrant persons the arrival *per se* has already inherent the characteristic of actual and/or symbolic *status degradation.*[37] It is about a *sui generis* degrading experience since it is allocated in the *'social space'* from *'there'* to *'here'*, in the *between* countries and societies geographical distant space. The re-allocation of the migrant person's social position is emerging via a kind of ritual, through *status degradation ceremonies:* the majority of migrant persons experience loss of their held ascribed or achived status position in the social hierarchy of their society of origin by the mere fact that they have become *"seekers"* of soil or of beggars of jobs to sustain living. The means to achieve these ends is to ascribe to the host country's required documentation issued only upon the satisfaction of the ritual (issuing of visas, permitts approvals etc.). Here one might detect the roots of explaing migrant persons' physical but mainly mental *returns* back to their original group after confronting the host culture.

Transcending the 'technical' boarder of legal entrance into the country, the migrant person is faced by other types of barriers which concern his/hers physical re-

immigrants", European Commission, Directorate-General Justice Non- discrimination policies and Roma coordination: PROGRESS for action grants, JUST/2012/PROG/ AG/D4 (2012-2014), (Balourdos D., Tsiganou J., Project Leaders and Co-coordinators). Also, Varouxi Ch., Sarris N., Frangiskou A., (2010): "Aspects of Immigration and Immigration Policies in Contemporary Greece", Athens, EKKE. Tsiganou J., et al. (2010): "Immigration and Criminality", Athens, EKKE. Balourdos D., & Tsiganou J., (2013): "Meta-analysis of Studies on the Social Integration of Immigrants in the Greek Society", Athens, EKKE – Papazisis. Tsiganou J. & Maratou L., (2014): "Women's Migration into Greece. A roadmap of social integration policies", Athens, EKKE.
[36] Parsons, 1940, pg. 844-850.
[37] Garfinkel H., (1956).

settelement and/or his/hers re-allocation of resources, that is of material, cultural, social capital. Hence, arises the question of migrant persons' assimilation or marginality. The data suggest that migrants in their process of re-settlement are met with numerous burdens, barriers and impediments ranging from language barriers to difficulties in shelter acquisition and proper housing. Information is scarce and inadequate and social networking with co-patriots insufficient. More importantly, the specific characteristics of the Greek labor market have influenced the difficulty of migrants' entrance to the formal sector of the economy, facilitating their exclusion and have helped the undifferentiated identification of the skilled/educated or the unskilled/uneducated migrant person with the unskilled worker. This way, almost automatically the majority of migrant populations into the country are placed to the social position of a reserved workforce occupying the empty and subordinate positions in the employment hierarchy. Hence, opportunities for upward social mobility for migrant persons are scarce mainly due to their extended desparate employment and the scarcity of empty employment positions for skilled or even semi-skilled labour. Despite the present economic crisis, however, limited chances for upward social mobility exist in the rural sector of the economy or the local labour markets but only for *older and better meshed migrant populations*.[38] Yet, the chances for migrant's upward social mobility seem to be withdrawn in the face of serious social transformations and change occuring with the advent of economic crises. As a result, irrespective of their previous status acquisition and stratum position in the country of origin the majority of immigrants in Greece are placed in subordinate status and stratum employment and social positions not only viv-a-vis natives but also comparing to their previous social situation.

Meta-analysis of existing research in Greece[39] has shown that the migrant populations into the country are mainly directed to the structures of the informal labor market and more particularly in the areas of domestic work, agriculture and the construction industry and only to a lesser extent in the tertiary sector, services (for instance, tourism) and the starting up of small business/ enterprizes. It seems that the subordinate social positions held by first generation migrant populations in the host country's social stratification system with scarce if any chances for upward social mobility it has been empirically a well founded fact for the Greek case too.

Turning now to the marginality thesis empirical evidence suggests that the majority of migrant populations being more permanently settled in this country are confronted with a kind of marginality in the sence that they are *cited* in a *structure of double ambivalence* – a confused ambivalence, an ambivalence towards their native culture and ambivalence towards the Greek culture. Narrative accounts are witnessing this double ambivalence not only in the state of minds of the migrant persons but also in their practices, future plans, hopes and aspirations. One might detect in the Greek migratory experiences the response type to marginality termed *"poise"*,[40] the abiding to ambivalence and the refusal to resolve it despite the cost in loneliness or anxiety.

Research has also shown that in most cases and irrespective from ethnic background, *assimilation* is phenomenal while deep down original culture values, beliefs, stereotypes, prejudices and practices are reinforced. This has become particularly evident in the confrontation of the present economic crisis in Greece by the migrant populations. They have reacted to the present crisis by the recruitment of memories, strategies of survival and reactions to experiences of past crises in their

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[38] Also in Papadopoulos A., Fratsea Loukia – Maria, (2013), pg. 88.
[39] Balourdos D., Tsiganou J., (2013).
[40] Weisberger A., (1992), pg. 430.

countries of origin. A phenomenon also met in the older generation of native people which may partly explain their xenophobic sentiments[41] energised by a traumatic national identity withdrawal.

Within the data provided by the Greek experience there is conclussive evidence for the *processual* in nature migrant person's marginal social position,[42] especially true for migrants coming from European countries. This is a rather dynamic condition based on the migrant person's *transition between two groups, a situation in which a person is moving vertically or horizontally between conflicting, competing or contradictory statuses: a* condition where the migrant person is still partially rooted in the former group but has not yet been fully accepted in the latter. Processual marginality is also veryfied in the case of second generation migrant students - to be scientists, where transition is facilitated by achievement in adolescence. It is *a transition of ascription.* [43]

In the case of Muslim immigrants in Greece, however, one may consider the possibility their marginal social position to be *essential* in nature since their situation seems marginal by virtue of structural limitations; marginality by definition ascribed in certain cases even upon arrival. Even in the case Muslim immigrants coming from Asian or African countries positively attempt to enter the Greek social stratification system (the case of middle-class professionals, strart-up businessmen and petty-entrepreneurs) they still remain racially members of a subordinate social *strata,* as their essential marginality, tends to be more permanent and less changeable.[44]

But what is more important is the *'distance'* of the culture of the migrant group from the dominant Greek (host) culture. Despite Golovensky's criticism against *marginality* as *"a sociological fiction based on a stereotype"* [45] and despite the fact that differences *per se* do not create marginality especially within the context of a pluralistic ethos, [46] there are differences irreconcilable with a person's community of orientation that are apt to create anxiety.[47] The example of rural women who migrate to cities and they must reconstruct *"survival networks"* or *"links to kin and community that make the difference between what people can earn and what they need to live successfully in the city"*[48] is instructive of the process made all the more difficult, if language, racial and ethnic differences between the migrant and the host culture are pronounced. In fact EKKE's data on the means and ways migrant women are coping with life difficulties[49] have shown that they develop strategies of survival which however include their struggle for earning to support their family members in their countries of origin. This task has become even more difficult with the advent of the present economic crisis which leaves no space for extra savings. In certain cases is

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[41] Sentiments of fear and xenophobia within the order populations have scored high in all surveys in Greece for the last 10-15 years (Source, Eurobarometer, ESS – consecutive rounds).
[42] Mancini - Billson J. (1988), pg. 190-199.
[43] Mancini - Billson J. (1988), pg. 190-199.
[44] Following Billson (ibid), it seems that the consequences of the marginal status ascribed upon arrival seem to depend mostly on its permanence, centrality, voluntariness and whether it is essential or processual in nature.
[45] Golovensky D., (1952), pg. 335.
[46] Billson , pg. 194.
[47] Turner R., (1964).
[48] Bunster X., Chaney E., (1985), pg. 7.
[49] "Women's Migration into Greece", Action 2.1. /09, European Integration Fund 2011, Ministry of Interior, (Tsiganou J., Project Leader and Co-coordinator).

documented even an *"inner strain and malaise"* [50] filled with anxieties generated by conflicting multiple loyalties, inconsistencies and role conflics.

Further, echoing Merton's position that a marginal person is one who *"seeks to abandon one membership group for another to which he is socially forbidden access"*[51], there is adequate evidence of migrants whose process of being accepted by the host system has taken ten to fifteen years. During this time some migrants seem to be *"double rooted",* that is intent on keeping a footing in both camps which refers to *dual identification* which is most classically marginal.

Turning now to the issue of voluntarity, neither the marginal re-location of migrant populations - if one adopts the structural nature of marginality - nor their re-placement in the lower and lowest social positions of the Greek social stratification system have been imposed by free choice but through some kind of exploitation, oppression or domination. The initial migrants' status degradation upon arrival into the country has been followed for most cases of migrant persons by downward social mobility through involuntary occupation incompatible to credentials, skills and previous employment experience.

Discussion

I have always been attracted to the so called *'omnibous'* theoretical constructs explaining social reality due to their imaginative power to induce us to the *Alice's Wander-land*. I have always been attracted to Park's idea of *human migration* in terms of persons living in *margins* and as such belonging to *nowhere,* inhabiting in *'no man's land'*, being *'no owners of soil'*. As time goes by, however, science has proven that abstract theorising has created numerous problems when it comes to empirical veryfication.

Until now, the status degradation suffered by migrant populations is evident. Their re-location in the lowest - lower social positions of the host social hierarchy is also not disputed and well empirically established.

Nevertheless, epistemologically speaking, a conceptual vaccuum is depicted in the operationalisation of migrant populations' mobility and social position in the host societies. Migrant populations are usually moving through limits and borders of two or even plenty geographical and social spaces. Thus becomes extremely difficult to be located or even locked in a static social environment needless to think the dynamic process of mobility and stratification, even when they have been temporarily settled. The massive outflux of already settled economic migrants in Greece with the advent of the present economic crisis adds further evidence in support to this argument. Yet, the employment of the concept of marginality in the relevant scientific dialogue has created more grounds of confusion although it has offered a fruitful insight by promoting the idea of the existence not of one but of multiple marginal social positions. This idea may induce our thinking to the direction of accepting the migrant persons' citation not to one but to multiple social positions.

The relevant epistemological dilemmas which are unearthed during the social process of the migratory experience might be further resolved by use or 'invention' of the so-called 'intermediate concepts' suitable to discover the 'limbo'case of the social position of the migrant populations. Such concepts are equally epistemologically sound as the dominant paradigms of social stratification and mobility.[52] The concepts

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[50] Stonequist 1937, pg. 3. Willie Ch., V., (1975), Kerckhoff A. C., McCormick T. C., (1955).
[51] Merton R., (1957), pg. 266.
[52] See also Mouzelis N., (1978), 150.

of 'social capital', of 'social closure' might be employed for use in explaining the social position and the opportunities for social mobility of migrant persons and groups.

However, I am convinced that the difficulty in conceptualising social mobility and the *"sui generis"* social position of migrant populations is mainly based to two unresolved dillemas and challenges for the future: For once, a serious impediment in theorizing and consequently proving the mobility and stratification aspects related to migrant populations lies to the fact that the existing epistemological tools are located to geographically specific and historically and socially unique social formations. As such lack explanatory power trascending state boarders and societal frontiers. This is probably why the concept of marginality, rather culturally than structurally located, has been central to relevant analyses. A second challenge is relevant to the nature of the *'human migration'*. Some ethical epistemological considerations might dictate to abstain from ventures that resemble to nailing butterflies on the wall. Migrant flows are characterised by movement, proximity and distance. Evidently, contemporary migratory waves have been flooding empty spaces and social places. The migrant populations occupy non desirable or abandoned social positions due to other persons' mobility. But as the floods are withdrawn, migrants are travelling around. Thus, the basic question becomes *permanency*. Is there enough historical time and space for social classes, states and positions to be clearly articulated with respect to the migrants question? Is there enough historical time and space for social mobility, given the often migrants' movements? Finally, a basic question is whether *social dynamics* - populations on the move – may be treated by tools of social statics, and in this way to be placed in more or less *static* social positions even temporarily.

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