

Albania 2017

**FDI In Transition Economies: Case of Albania**

Queen Mary Expedition Fund

School of Geography

Thanks to Queen Mary Expedition Fund, in the summer of 2017 I travelled to Albania for 3 weeks. The reason I picked Albania is that it is a transition economy in South-East Europe that is largely under-researched in academic literature. The purpose of this trip was to explore the country my dissertation is based on, in more detail.

The overall purpose of my trip was to explore Foreign Direct Investment in the transition economy of Albania. I set out with the aim of answering two main research questions. Firstly, I wanted to know how the Albanian state has positioned itself to attract foreign investment. To answer this, I was lucky enough to be able to hold an interview with representatives from AIDA (Albanian Investment and Development Agency), and a non-profit organization called Invest in Albania. I was particularly happy when I managed to organize an interview with Milva Ekonomi, the minister of Economic Development – who helped me find out the ways in which the Albanian Economy is attracting FDI. I also managed to get an interview with a representative from the Bank of Albania, which proved far more difficult than I thought due to security reasons.

The second thing I wanted to research was how foreign investments are spatially distributed in Albania. Whilst wondering around the booming capital city Tirana,

I noticed a lot of foreign firms that I had seen in other countries. Shops such as Zara and GAP had been newly built, and a supermarket called CONAD (a popular franchise in Italy) had been built in several locations. I wandered into these stores and asked the employees if there were any other branches. To my surprise, I found that they had only been built in the capital city. I used this opportunity to also find out if working for a foreign company had impacted their life in any way.

In sum, my three weeks in Albania were unforgettable. I was pleasantly surprised and equally grateful for how much people were willing to help me. Everyone I approached in search for help towards my research was incredibly warm and welcoming. To conclude, I would like to express my gratitude for the Queen Mary Expedition Fund for allowing me to gain sufficient knowledge on the theme of FDI in transition economies. My visit to Albania would not have been possible without it. The trip was invaluable towards gathering primary data. It allowed me to conduct questionnaires, group interviews, and follow-up individual interviews. What I am most grateful for was having the opportunity to organize and speak to government representatives that gave me invaluable information, which will be used in my dissertation. Furthermore, I collected secondary data and undertook interviews with staff members from INSTAT, Bank of Albania and AIDA. After three weeks, I left Albania very happy with the outcome of my results, and I have Queen Mary Expedition Fund to thank for that.