

Greece's new Emigration at times of Crisis

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Lois Labrianidis[#] and Manolis Pratsinakis^{*}

ABSTRACT

Although considerable research is being carried out on the phenomenon of immigration to Greece, there is a notable lack of scientific attention on the recent resurgence of emigration at times of recession and austerity. Aiming to partly fill in this gap, this paper contextualizes the recent resurgence of emigration within Greece's changing and complexifying migratory landscape. In so doing, and drawing on quantitative and qualitative data, the paper describes the magnitude, dynamics and main destinations of the current crisis-driven emigration and outlines its demographics makeup. It further provides evidence on the multiplicity of migration trajectories and discusses the prospect of return and the potential of the development of transnational economic ties between Greece and its highly skilled emigrants.

Keywords: emigration, crisis and migration, Greece, migration and skills, brain drain

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1. Introduction

Traditionally an emigration country, Greece became a target destination for immigration in the early 1970s. This process gathered momentum during the 1990s and since then, population influxes have become crucial factors of societal change, largely monopolising public discussion and academic research on migration. Yet, in the last few years, at a time when Greece is suffering deeply from the economic crisis and concomitant austerity measures, as well as their social and political consequences, a renewed public discussion on emigration has appeared. In this discussion, rising unemployment and steep decreases in salaries and welfare allowances are cited as push factors contributing to what is seen as the emergence of a new emigration wave from the country. There is already extended media coverage of this new emigration, which is presented as an one-way option for certain population segments, such as the young and the highly skilled, and hence a drain of the most dynamic part of the country's labour force (Pratsinakis et al forthcoming). Despite this attention, however, little is known about the current intensification of emigration from Greece, its characteristics, and the aspirations and experiences of the emigrants.

In fact, emigration from Greece never ceased as such, even if it remained numerically insignificant as compared to the inflows. The establishment of the right to free movement, employment and settlement across the European Union (EU) for Greek citizens in 1988

allowed for unrestricted mobility, although this never took the form of mass outflows. Apart from Greek emigrants of the post-war wave and their offspring moving between Greece and European destinations, and increased number of students abroad (Karamesini 2010), this primarily concerned special population categories, for instance people belonging to minority groups such as the Muslims of Thrace, or, later on, the (then recently settled) Diaspora Greeks from the former Soviet Union (Pratsinakis 2002, 2013; Voutira 2006). At the same time, a wave of Greek scientists and professionals leaving the country in search of better career opportunities and prospects abroad has been always in place but became more prominent since the 1990s (Labrianidis 2011). In the last few years, outmigration of professionals is further intensifying as job opportunities are shrinking in the shadow of the crisis (Pelliccia 2013; Triandafyllidou and Gropas 2014; Labrianidis 2014).

Yet unfavourable socio-economic developments and rampant unemployment are not only intensifying emigration flows among the highly skilled, but altering mobility aspirations and decisions of people of various socio-economic backgrounds for diverse destinations (Pratsinakis et al forthcoming; Damianakos 2014; Tamis 2014; Konstandinidis 2014; Mihopoulos 2014). They ever complexify Greece's migration map, as the country still receives significant immigration flows of people of diverse origins, many of whom aim to also move further to other European destinations as the crisis in Greece is deepening, and while thousands of refugees, primarily from Syria and Iraq, have gotten stranded in Greece in their attempt to seek asylum in the countries of Northern Europe after the country's northern borders were closed.

The current complexification of migration patterns, which is not only endemic in Greece but is found in many countries, forces us to acknowledge the temporal coexistence and intersectionality of emigration and immigration and the possibility of reversal of developmental trajectories (see Hatziprokopiou et al forthcoming). In the new global migration map, several countries are experiencing both emigration and immigration flows of a considerable scale (King and Conti 2013; Okolski 2012). This empirical reality led Castles and Miller (2009) to propose the proliferation of migration transition as a general tendency in the ‘age of migration’ – i.e. the temporal coexistence of various stages of ‘the migration transition’ in many countries.

In Greece, which exemplifies this tendency, considerable research is being carried out on the phenomenon of immigration. Yet scientific attention on the recent resurgence of emigration at times of recession and austerity remains rather limited, calling for more research in that area. As a step in that direction, this paper presents the findings of a nationwide representative survey (HO survey) that was conducted through the funding of the National Bank of Greece, awarded to the first author by the London School of Economic’s Hellenic Observatory in the 2014 research projects call. The HO survey was compiled during March-April 2015 by telephone interviewing, using the Greek phones database (www.greekphones.gr) that contains more than 6,000,000 landline numbers, aiming to provide a comprehensive overview of the key characteristics of the outflow. It was administered by the University Research Institute (EPI) through a stratified sampling method based on the household as unit of analysis. A structured questionnaire was addressed to a total of 1237 households comprising 3970 people and

generated information for 248 emigrants, approximately one third of whom had left Greece after 2010. Each individual interviewed was first asked to provide detailed personal information and information about the composition of the household she/he formed part of. She/he was then asked questions about the migration intentions of the members of the household and the migration practices of the members of her/his household and descending nuclear family.

The paper also presents data from a (non-random) smaller scale online survey (newdiaspora survey) that was distributed in December 2015 through the website and social media pages of newdiaspora, a participatory media channel of the new generation of Greeks living abroad during the crisis in their homeland (www.newdiaspora.com). This survey focused on the highly skilled migrants and aimed to complement the HO survey data on migration motivations, the prospects of return, and the development of transnational economic ties. Concretely, 81 university graduates participated. Two out of three of the participants hold a postgraduate degree and one out of three holds a PhD degree or was a PhD candidate at the time of the survey.

Finally, the survey data are enriched with insights from field research conducted in Amsterdam with which we aimed to look at individual stories in a more systematic way. Concretely, under the same funding, the second author conducted ten in-depth and ten less detailed interviews with Greek men and women aged between 23 and 40 years old who have immigrated to Amsterdam, including four people who had returned to Greece at the time of the research. He has also conducted participant observation and several informal interviews with people in

the Greek community house in the same city as part of his on-going IF Marie Curie EUMIGRE project.

The structure of the paper unfolds as follows: First, we briefly present the patterns of immigration to Greece in the past few decades in order to situate the current resurgence of emigration within the country's ever-complex migratory landscape. Second, we draw on available primary and secondary data to outline the key features of the new emigration addressing the outflows of both non-Greek and Greek citizens. Then, in the main part of the paper, we focus on the latter category, the Greek citizens, discussing the results of the HO survey. Having described the magnitude, dynamics and main destinations of the current crisis-driven emigration, we go on to describe its demographics, drawing comparisons with previous population outflows, such as the so-called post-war 'guest worker' emigration and the emigration of professionals that took place in the directly preceding decades. In the final section, drawing primarily on the qualitative material and the newdiaspora survey, we provide evidence on the multiplicity of migration trajectories and discuss the prospect of return and the potential of the development of transnational economic ties between Greece and its highly skilled emigrants. In the concluding section, we attempt a general assessment of the evidence presented.

2. Greece's complex migration map

Since the end of the 19th century, Greece had been a major source country for emigration. In the mid-1970s it acquired a positive migratory balance for the first time in its recent history, largely due to return

migration from Western Europe. In the same period, it started attracting a modest number of immigrants (Nikolinakos 1975), a process that became numerically significant during the 1990s, when the immigrant population more than quadrupled in size, making the country a de facto destination for international migrants. This transition, and its underlying factors, coincided with similar pathways of other southern European countries (King 2000). Looking back more than 25 years later, one may distinguish among three phases in the development of Greece's migratory landscape (see Hatziprokopiou et al forthcoming).

The first phase, which marked the 1990s, was closely connected to the disintegration of the former Eastern bloc and was caused by two distinct population movements: undocumented immigration from the Balkans and immigration of people of Greek descent (Pratsinakis 2014). The second phase was initiated in the late 1990s – early 2000s and was characterised by the diversification and globalisation of immigration flows and by the on-going process of European integration. The global economic downturn and Greece's escalating debt crisis mark the transition to a third phase starting from the late 2000s. On the outset, tough migration control policies in other South European countries and related agreements with their neighbouring countries, diverted the bulk of undocumented immigration to the EU through the Greek borders: in 2010, an estimated 90 percent of all apprehensions for unauthorized entry into the EU took place in Greece, compared to 50 percent in 2008 (Kasimis 2012). This, together with longstanding inadequacies of the Greek asylum system, marked by extremely low approval rates, as well as the EU approach to asylum based on the Dublin Regulation, gave way to a creeping humanitarian crisis affecting people trapped in Greece

without documents and hence without rights, particularly evident in Athens and in western port cities where most newcomers concentrated. In practice, this had turned Greece into a 'storagehouse' for immigration that is unwanted by the countries of the north. Currently the so-called refugee crisis is dramatically unfolding along with EU's ever-toughening attempts to limit the number of incoming asylum seekers, and Greece's Eastern islands are the major entry points in the extremely perilous journey taken by the refugees, the majority of whom originate in war-torn Syria. And while in the outset of the refugee crisis Greece was a transit country in refugees' attempt to reach the countries of Western and Northern Europe, the EU's policy of sealing the northern borders of Greece reinforced the country's role as a 'storagehouse' for unwanted immigration and as an internal borderland of migration control within the EU territory.

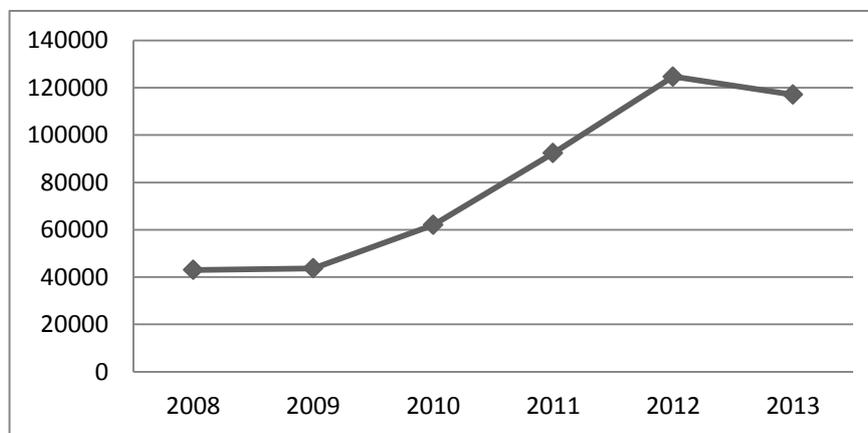
3. A new turnaround?

3.1 The "emigration of immigrants"

Yet, in this last phase, immigration is just one side of the coin, emigration being the other, with population outflows growing steeply after year 2010, as seen in graph one. Even though not attracting much media attention, non-Greek citizens comprise a considerable part of this new emigration wave; according to Eurostat data, non-Greek citizens seem to account for almost half of the outflow in the 2010-2013 period (see table 2), namely, 187,369 people. The emigration of non-Greek nationals is only partly reflected on the 2011 Census data and only for

the population of nationals of ‘developed’ countries (such as Canadians, Swedes, US citizens and Australians), which decreased significantly between 2001-2011. This decrease probably relates to the emigration of foreign employees following their companies shutting down or relocating in the context of the market downturn, as well as to the outflow of foreign-born people of Greek roots who had recently ‘returned’ to Greece.

Figure 1. The emigration outflow in the period of crisis



Source: Eurostat

At the same time the difficulties related to the crisis have had a direct, and one may say more acute and consequential, impact also on less privileged categories of migrants who, even if this is not depicted by the Census¹, account for the largest part of the emigration flow among the people without Greek citizenship. For nationals of new EU member states in particular, their countries’ recent accession opens up a range of new mobility patterns that may provide alternatives as circumstances in Greece deteriorate (e.g. Hatziprokopiou and Markova 2014, on

¹ Despite the trend of immigrants leaving the country after the beginning of the crisis, the overall immigrant population has grown considerably between 2001-2011 as has had the population for most nationalities.

Bulgarians in Greece considering to return). Albanians, too, severely affected by rising unemployment, may take advantage of proximity and the recent visa-free travel regulations to move to Albania for some time before migrating to a new destination, or to engage in circular movements linked to seasonal work in Greece; return migration does take place but seems to be a rather ambivalent project and not necessarily a definitive one, especially for the second generation (Gemi 2013; Michail 2013; Kapetanaki 2015). At the same time, leaving Greece is also an option, necessity or fate for migrants from more distant lands. First, deportations and ‘voluntary returns’ of undocumented migrants, predominantly from Pakistan and Afghanistan, had intensified in the last few years (Yousef 2013, 21-22; Dimitriadi 2013, 19, 25). In addition, an outflow of undocumented migrants transiting through Greece towards northern European destinations, initially via the port of Patras and then via the Balkan route until the Northern Borders were closed, was underway from the late 2000s.

Table 1. Emigration from Greece, 2010-2013

	2010	2011	2012	2013
Greek citizens	28301	53210	65264	62089
Non Greek citizens	33740	39194	59430	55005
Total emigration	62041	92404	124694	117094

Source: Eurostat Database, ‘Emigration by sex, age group and citizenship,’

http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr_emi1ctz&lang=en

[Accessed on 24/6/2015](#)

3.2 The emigration of Greek citizens

Concerning the emigration of Greek citizens, it is interesting to note that until recently Greek citizens have notably been amongst the least mobile Europeans. A Eurobarometer survey on geographic and labour market mobility, conducted in 2005, showed that Greeks were the least favorable Europeans (after the Cypriots) towards long distance mobility (European Commission 2006). Another survey, conducted in 2009, just a year before the crisis started deepening in Greece, showed that only eight per cent of Greeks envisaged working abroad sometime in the future (the lowest after that of Italians), while the share of Greeks who would be ready to work in some other country in case of unemployment at home was found to be well below the EU average (European Commission 2010). Yet this was soon due to change. In 2014, more than one out of three Greeks claimed that they would be willing to emigrate in search for work (Newpost 2014), and the share appears to be markedly higher among the educated young adults who form the category most prone to emigrate². Despite the previously recorded scepticism towards emigration, many Greeks were forced by the circumstances to change their views on and plans about external mobility in a very short time span. As an indication of this trend, CV submissions to the Europass portal have increased exponentially in the past few years: in 2014, 54,000 CVs were submitted from Greece, 2.6 times more than in 2011 and nine times those of 2007.

What happened in the meantime was the combined effect of crisis, austerity, recession, and a generalised mistrust towards institutions and

² A survey conducted in 2010 to young (22-35 years old) Greek adults with university education demonstrates that 73 per cent of the respondents had already taken steps to that end (Chiotis 2010).

disillusionment from the political system in the country. To give just an obvious example: in the first trimester of 2014, the unemployment rate in Greece rose to 27.8 per cent, more than double that of 2010 and more than triple than in 2008; notably, the rate for the youngest cohort of the workforce exceeded 56 per cent. The same period saw dramatic cuts in earnings and allowances (e.g. Matsaganis 2013). These unfavourable socio-economic conditions are drastically changing mobility intentions and aspirations. They are turning emigration into a necessary survival strategy for many people who are finding it hard to make ends meet, while, at the same time, they render emigration an increasingly appealing option for others in less pressing need who see their career potentials being critically reduced³.

Indeed, a large number of people seem to have already taken that step. According to EUROSTAT data, as shown in Table 1, 208,864 Greeks left the country in the 2010-2013 period⁴. According to the findings of the HO survey 222,500 Greek citizens emigrated from 2010 until the time when survey was conducted (March-April 2015)⁵. Yet the HO data

³ Besides international migration, the crisis seem to have influenced patterns of internal migration too. Although the centralised geography of the Greek productive and employment structures still holds, affecting internal movements towards Athens and other major urban centres, a new trend of counter-urbanization seems to be gaining pace in the context of the crisis, which even though outside of the paper's main focus needs to be noted here. Drawing on in-depth interviews with urban to rural migrants, Gkartzios (2013) underlines the emergence of a 'crisis counterurbanisation' in Greece triggered largely by unemployment at origin, rather than pro-rural motivations and idyllic constructions of rurality. Migrants' stories also highlight the importance of the extended family in counter-urban movements, in terms of the location of destination and the multiple support offered. In addition, a study commissioned by the Greek Government (Ministry of Rural Development and Food, 2012) involving residents in Athens and Thessaloniki (Greece's main metropolitan areas) shows that almost seven out of ten of respondents have thought of moving to rural areas in Greece. More than half of those respondents are aged between 25 and 39 years old and almost 20% has already started organizing their relocation. Further research is necessary to enquire into the characteristics of this migration as well as to into how different migration alternatives are considered and pursued at times of crisis.

⁴ Interestingly, from mid-2014 to mid-2015 EUROSTAT changed three times the statistics on Greek emigration, in all cases downscaling the outflow.

⁵ For our estimations we used the "native" Greek population that is, the total population excluding foreign nationals of the 2011 Census as the reference population. Therefore we accordingly excluded from our sample 1) those (35) Greek emigrants who had left Greece before 2011 and had not returned

modestly underestimate the total size of the outflow as they 1) may underrepresent the emigration of minority Greeks, namely people belonging to the Muslim minority and people originated in the former Soviet Union, who according to anecdotal information seem to have emigrated at a higher rate than the rest of Greeks (following trends predating the crisis; Voutira 2006; Pratsinakis 2002); 2) miss a segment of those emigrants who emigrated together with their extended families; and 3) finally, do not record those emigrants whose families (with which they reunited) were already abroad before the crisis and thus are not reachable via the sampling method followed. The second and third categories primarily concern emigrants who moved to destination countries of earlier migrations, e.g. Germany, Australia, USA, Canada and according to estimation provided in Damanakis et al (2014), comprise a sizeable segment of the emigration flow, especially that which took place in the years immediately after the deepening of crisis.

Assuming that emigration continued strong until the end of 2015 and taking into account the estimations in Damanakis and the fact that the emigration of the minority Greeks may have been modestly larger than that recorded, we may estimate that the total emigration outflow of Greeks from 2010 until the end of 2015 ranges between 280,000 and 350,000 people. Given our finding on return migration in that period,

before that year and 2) the (62) non-Greek citizens since they were significantly underrepresented reflecting a sample bias stemming primarily from the fact that many of them do not have landlines. Hence the sample size on which the projection is based is $N=3970-62-35=3873$. Finally, concerning the sub-sample of the post-2010 emigrant population, it should be mentioned that we included not the spouses of the recorded emigrants who, according our methodology belong to a different ascending nuclear family and thus form not part of our sample. We did add, however, half of the emigrants' children population that live together with them abroad ($N=24/2=12$). According to our methodology, the emigrants' children population we should split between the families of the two spouses. As a result the sub-sample of the post-2010 emigrant comprises 87 people, 75 emigrants and 12 children.

which was recorded to be 15% of the total outflow, we may then safely estimate that more than 240,000 post-2010 emigrants are currently living abroad. At the same time the data of the HO survey hint that the emigration will further grow strongly in the years to come. 3,6% of our sample, or else approximately 355,500 Greek citizens were planning to emigrate within the next year. Even if most likely only a minority will actually do so, the findings are indicative of the emigration dynamics at the time of the survey.

Thus, at the dawn of the new millennium, the crisis signals a complexification or even a turnaround of Greece's migration transition. Emigration flows in the post-2010 period appear to be comparable in size with those of post-war decades. There are, however, significant differences in their characteristics, with the current emigration wave taking place simultaneously with ongoing immigration to or through the country, and being much more diverse than in the past. As we will show, this diversity does not only concern the ethnic background of emigrants but also their social class, qualifications, demographic features and destinations abroad. In the next section we provide evidence of this diversity and its implications, drawing primarily on the HO survey data.

4. The characteristics of the emigration outflow

4.1 Migration destinations

A first observation deriving from the dataset concerns the diversity of emigrant destinations during the crisis period. As also found by Triandafyllidou and Gropas (2014), new emigrants are heading to various destinations, many more than in previous decades, from the Middle East

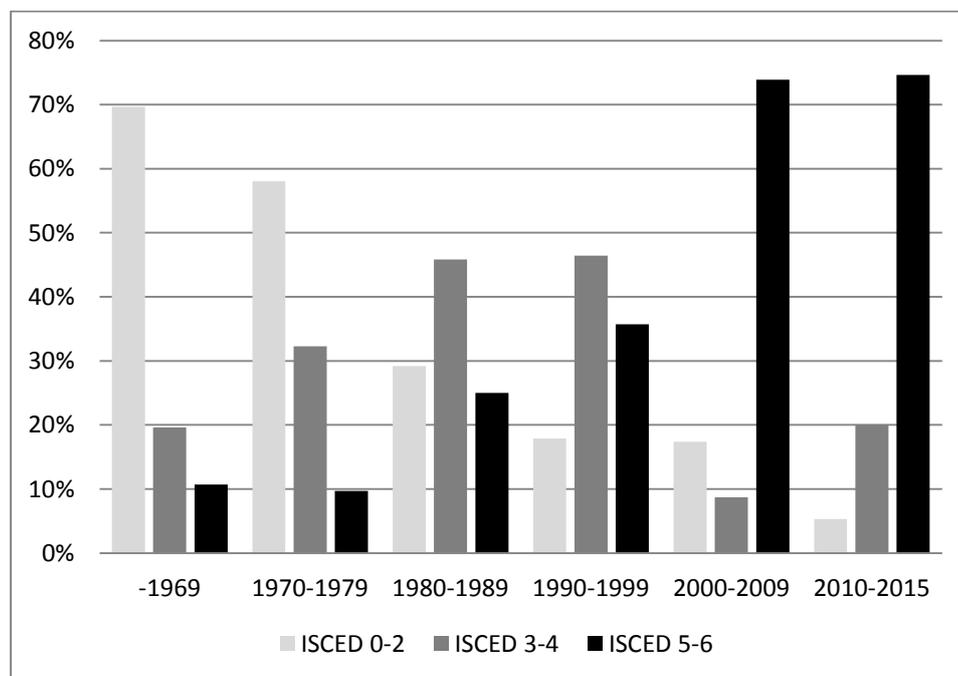
to the Far East and from East Europe and the Balkans to Canada and Australia. The vast majority, however, seem to be heading to EU countries. Germany and the UK in particular attract by far the largest share of the outflows concentrating together more than half of the post-2010 emigration. According to our HO survey data, the USA and Australia seem to be the next most popular destinations, closely followed by several other European destinations, namely the Netherlands, Sweden, France, Belgium, Austria and Switzerland. However, given that the data provided by Tamis (2014) are accurate, we may clearly single out Australia as the third most significant destination of the new Greek emigration due to the 'return' of a sizeable population of 'Greek Australians' to Australia.

4.2 The emigration of the highly educated

In terms of the emigrants' educational background, the HO survey data point to a clear differentiation over time. In the early years, emigration concerned primarily people of lower educational backgrounds; from the 1990s onwards increasingly so the highly skilled (see figure 1). Until the mid-1970s emigration flows almost uniformly comprised people of lower education who left the country to fill in the gaps in the booming industrial sectors of Western countries, especially in Europe, and were later joined by their families. Emigration of highly skilled workers was already taking place but it only became numerically significant in the 1990s, due to the increase of tertiary education graduates in the meantime. Until then, highly skilled migration was to a large extent a matter of choice for the middle and upper social classes, and most emigrants left the country for reasons other than employment. This

choice was often framed as an ‘escape’ from restrictions imposed by a parochial Greek society and as a desire to explore the world and live as cosmopolitans (Labrianidis 2011, 196-7).

Figure 2. Emigrants’ educational background, by decade of emigration



Source: HO Survey data

Labour market restructuring led to the deterioration, over the 1990s, of employment opportunities for the cohorts born from the 1970s onwards, and the persistence of relatively high unemployment and job precariousness in the 2000s (Karamesini 2010). The substantial opening of higher education to these cohorts was not matched by a proportional rise in corresponding employment opportunities, resulting in relatively high unemployment rates among graduates. Although different educational levels gave access to jobs of different social status and prestige, young people of all education levels, including the highly educated, faced difficulties in making their transition from education to

work (ibid.). Whilst a segment of young graduates would be eventually absorbed in public sector employment, high proportions experienced unemployment, underemployment or employment in jobs unrelated to their skills. This was not mainly due to a supposed 'over-education' of Greeks, as conventionally assumed (Labrianidis 2011; 2014). Rather, the mismatch between supply and demand of graduates was primarily due to the structure of the Greek economy, more specifically to the limited demand for professionals from the private sector, as most companies produce low value added products and services (ibid.).

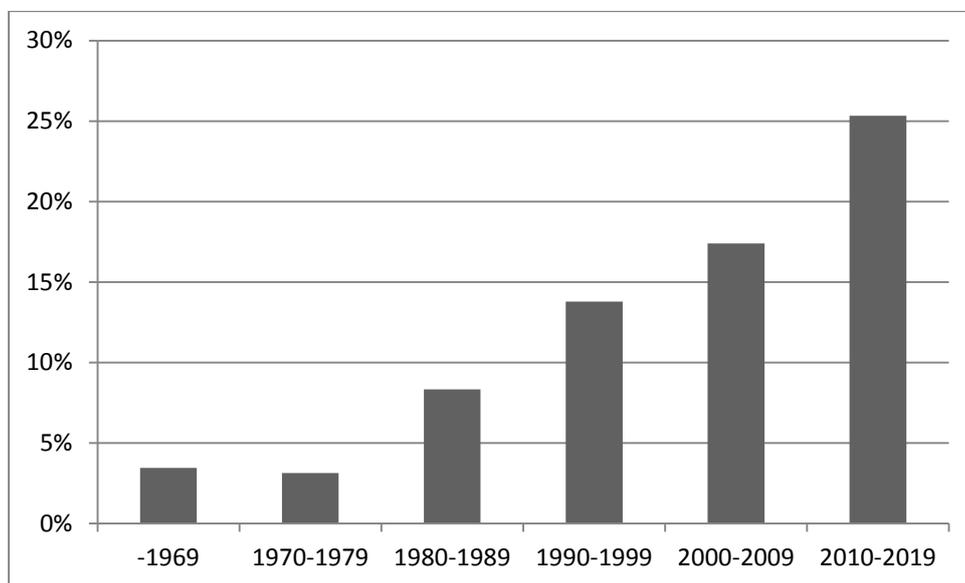
As a result, even before the eruption of the crisis a considerable number of highly skilled young Greeks had been emigrating, mostly for reasons related to employment such as better career prospects, better chances of finding a job related to their specialization, satisfactory income, increasing their knowledge in their field and acquiring work experience abroad. Yet, the outmigration of graduates has critically intensified as job opportunities shrunk in the shadow of the crisis, and public sector employment is not a possibility anymore as a result of cuts and restrictions in new recruitments (Triandafyllidou and Gropas 2014; Labrianidis 2014). The HO survey shows that more than half of the total outflow of professionals recorded in the post war period took place after 2010, thus highlighting the alarming rates that brain drain has acquired in the past few years.

More than two out of three of the post-2010 emigrants are university graduates⁶. Moreover, one fourth of the total outflow concerns people

⁶ Here it should be mentioned that our findings on the share of those with tertiary among the total post-2010 outflow, that is 75% as seen in Figure 2, should be seen as the maximum estimate and it could be that their actual share is (modestly) smaller. The findings from an earlier survey (HIDDEN data set)

who hold postgraduate degrees or are graduates of medical and polytechnic schools. As seen in Figure 3, the share of those emigrants as part of the total emigration outflow has risen considerably after 2010. Thus it is not only the sheer size of the emigration of professionals that has vastly increased but also the percentage of those with the longest years in education, constituting a double brain drain for the country.

Figure 3. Share of postgraduate and medical and polytechnic school graduate emigrants by decade of emigration



Source: HO Survey data

conducted a year earlier at the University of Macedonia with the same methodology as the HO survey, show a considerable increase in the outflow of people of middle educational backgrounds (ISCED 3,4) during the crisis period. Accordingly the outflow of graduates is found to be less significant (51%). Due to the increased number of missing values of the HIDDEN data in the migration questions we consider the findings of HO more reliable (see Labrianidis and Pratsinakis 2016). Yet given that the HO data on the post 2010 migration come from a limited number of people (N=75), it is also possible that due to statistical bias they overestimate the share of highly educated Greeks and the reality being somewhere in between the findings of the two surveys, approximately around 65%. In any case the overall conclusion drawn from both data sets is that the majority of the emigrants are university graduates yet a considerable share of people with lower educational backgrounds have left Greece too.

4.3 Other educational groups

As can be derived from the previous analysis, the crisis seems to have amplified push factors that already existed in Greece for the highly skilled (Labrianidis 2011), intensifying their emigration patterns. But it has also impacted on the mobility aspirations and practices of people of other socio-economic backgrounds. Even though they form a minority, the crisis seems once again to push people of lower educational backgrounds out of the country, a finding that deconstructs a rather dominant assumption in Greek media, which especially in the earlier years represented the new Greek emigration wave as a phenomenon exclusively concerning the highly skilled (Pratsinakis, et. al. forthcoming). Our HO survey data indicate that there is a difference by country of destination in terms of the educational background of the emigrants. Those who immigrate to Britain are almost exclusively people with high education credentials, while Germany attracts a considerable number of people with low or middle educational backgrounds (43% of the total inflow), in addition to the highly educated. This is also the case for the Netherlands, as Pratsinakis, et. al. (forthcoming) show.

According to the HO survey data, those with middle and lower levels of educational attainment mostly commonly find jobs abroad via their social networks, while highly educated emigrants find jobs mostly through personal solicitations. It thus seems that people of lower educational backgrounds immigrate to Germany and/or the Netherlands because they can make use of social networks that are available to them from earlier emigrations. As a result, former guestworker's destinations

concentrate a much more diverse population in terms of the educational background of the immigrants in contrast to the UK and newer destination countries, such as Switzerland, which primarily attract the highly skilled.

4.4 The economic situation of the emigrant's household and the age composition of the emigration flow

Concerning the economic background of the emigrants, we classified their ascending or direct family into five income categories, namely: 1) very high; 2) high; 3) medium; 4) middle to low; and 5) low and very low, by weighting the monthly income of their household and the number of household members. Our findings indicate that, after the year 2000, the households with very high incomes are the ones that are the most likely to 'send' emigrants abroad; a trend that stays strong also during the crisis period. In particular, for the 2010-2015 period, emigrants from households with very high incomes comprise 9% of the total outflow, even those households form only 2% of the total survey sample. Emigration is a costly project and thus more easily undertaken by those with means. However, drastic decrease of salaries and rising unemployment in the past years has led to a sharp increase in the emigration rate of people from "low to very low" income households. While before the crisis this category of people used to be the least prone to emigrate, they now constitute 28% of the post-2010 emigration outflow, a percentage that is on par with their share in the total sample (26%).

Concerning the flows of remittances, according to the HO survey findings, the vast majority of migrants neither send nor receive money

(68%). It thus appears that emigration contributes mainly to the subsistence and/or the socio-economic progress of the emigrants themselves and not of the household as a whole. Only 19% of emigrants (expectedly stemming mainly from low and very low income households) send money to Greece, while the remaining 13% receive economic support from Greece⁷.

Change is also observed in the age composition of the emigrant population. According to the HO survey data, the mean age of the emigrant is 30,5 years old in the post-2010 period, which is two years higher than in the 2000-2009 period (28,3) and six years higher than in the 1990-1999 period (24,3). At the same time, a significant number of the emigrant population left Greece after their forties. This number was recorded at 11% of the total outflow, and it may in fact be slightly higher taking if we take into account the emigrant families that could not be recorded through our sampling method. The crisis has thus driven a significant percentage of people to take the route of emigration at a late phase in their life-course. Given the earlier discussed findings on migration intentions (Chiotis 2010; Newpost 2014), we may assume that the decision to emigrate for older people, as well as for those coming from lower educational backgrounds and lower income families, may be framed more as a matter of need than a (career) choice. However, as will be highlighted in the following section, this seems to becoming a rather generalized condition in the current emigration wave concerning a significant segment of the highly educated emigrants, too.

⁷ Similar data are also recorded by the newdiaspora survey, namely that most of the emigrants (64%) neither send nor receives remittance. Yet the newdiaspora survey, which was conducted 8 months later and among graduates only, indicated that currently sending money (25%) may have become more common, at least among the highly skilled migrants.

4.5 Migration motivations

The paramount importance of the grim economic conditions prevailing in the country in shaping emigration decisions is reflected in the HO survey data about emigration motivations: 72 per cent of the post-2010 migrants of the sample left Greece looking for (better) employment. Thus, although we witness a diversification of emigration flows in terms of the characteristics of migrants and their destinations, an opposite trend seems to be happening in terms of emigration motivations. Emigration appears to be largely driven by economic reasons in contrast to the more diverse emigration motivations during the 1990s and 2000s. However, it should be noted that despite providing an indication of a change that seems to have taken place, the above-cited data need to be approached with caution, since in many cases information stems not from the emigrants themselves but from family members speaking about the emigrant (see Labrianidis and Pratsinakis 2016).

More reliable information can be obtained through the newdiaspora survey. From the open answers of the respondents, it becomes clear that most of the pre-crisis emigrants, many of whom left for studies, saw their emigration as a significant career move. In contrast, it was a minority of the post-2010 emigrants who saw their emigration in that way. The majority emigrated due to feelings of lacking any prospects in their home country and due to an overall disappointment with the grim socio-economic situation in Greece which often went hand in hand with a deep disillusionment with the political establishment in Greece and with state institutions. Taking their answers into account helps us qualify

the HO survey data on emigration motivations. Rather than emigrating for strictly economic goals such as income maximization or career advancement, many highly skilled emigrants relocate abroad pushed by feelings of disappointment with the economic but also with the sociopolitical environment of crisis-ridden Greece and driven by broader aspirations for building a better life abroad.

Concerning our data on unemployment, a clear distinction emerges between the pre-crisis emigrants and those who left after 2010, who are far more pushed by the unfavorable conditions in the Greek labor market. The unemployed formed a small minority among pre-crisis emigrants while, according to *both* the HO and the newdiaspora survey, half of the emigrants who left after 2010 were unemployed at the time of emigration. Yet, even though lack of a job seems to be a major reason driving people out of the country, our data clearly show that it is not the only determining reason, since half of the emigrants were employed in Greece at the time of emigration. In agreement with the data cited above on emigration motivations, it seems that for a sizeable share of the higher educated emigrants it was not absolute exclusion from the labor market per se that drove their decision to migrate but the insecurity for their future in Greece and the quest for a better socioeconomic and political environment abroad.

5. New emigration trajectories and the prospect of return

As described, today's crisis-driven emigrants differ from those of post-war times in their socio-economic, educational and demographic characteristics. The macro-structural causes and developmental

conditions triggering emigration at present are also radically different. In addition, the context and infrastructure of current emigration is significantly altered from the past. Free movement within the EU makes emigration an easier mobility strategy to pursue, reducing its economic and psychological costs. Emigration is no longer seen as a once-in-a-lifetime decision, as people increasingly move spontaneously and temporarily, looking for potential opportunities mostly in Western and Northern Europe. At the same time, people are not supported by state institutions in their emigration trajectories as was the case in the post-war period.

The 'new emigrants' follow diverse mobility patterns. Some may leave with more permanent settlement intentions, after having collected enough information about life in their destination country but not always having already found a job there. Others emigrate for short-term periods as target earners, aiming to contribute to the family income, to respond to immediate financial need until 'things get better in Greece', or to support themselves as they wait for a job opening in the country. Others leave for short periods, hosted by friends or relatives who are already abroad, to inquire into the employment possibilities and life conditions through first-hand experience of everyday life in the country they visit. Many more apply for jobs from Greece, waiting to be called for an interview, and some of them do secure employment before settlement in the receiving country.

According to the HO survey data, the majority of emigrants find work abroad in a relatively short time, a period between 0-6 months (81%). Yet there is also a minority who did not manage to find a job and

returned, and others who are currently unemployed abroad. The majority of emigrants (72%) are found to be working abroad in jobs that match their qualifications, while 21% of them are working below their skills and 6% are unemployed. However, these data should be treated with caution because for most cases it is not the migrant her/himself providing the answer but another member of the household (most commonly the parent). We may very well assume that the emigrant paints a more positive image of his/her situation to his/her parent. We were in fact able to at least partly affirm this assumption by comparing the jobs that the emigrants do abroad and their level and field of study.

In addition, our qualitative data in Amsterdam, in accordance to previous research in Germany (Damanakis 2014b; Georgiou et al. 2013), show that several emigrants of those who have not secured employment before emigration, end up in low-skilled jobs for a considerable period before they manage to find jobs matching their qualifications; this is also the case for people of high educational backgrounds. Kostas, a trained hematologist, chose to emigrate to Amsterdam in 2012 because his aunt, Rina, runs a restaurant there. He was hosted at her place and worked in her restaurant until he earned enough money to rent his own flat. He then found a second job in a café nearby and a few months later he was offered an annual contract in a museum restaurant. At the same time, he has been learning Dutch and looking for jobs matching his credentials. The same pathway was earlier followed by Rina's son-in-law, Petros, an engineer. After a year and a half working in several restaurants in Amsterdam, Petros found a well-paid job in his field. It took longer for Kostas to find such a job, but he was not disappointed. Although he claimed that things are considerably more difficult in the

Netherlands now than they were in 2009, when Petros arrived, Kostas was rather confident that sooner or later he will find a good job, too. He was not considering going back, since, as he said, he has no chances of finding any job in Greece. In a follow-up conversation, he told us that he did manage to find employment in a company in a sector close to his profession. He was happy with this development, even though he confessed he did not expect it would take him three years to meet this goal.

In many cases, people prefer staying abroad over returning to Greece, even if they have to work in low-skilled jobs for prolonged periods of time. In Greece similar jobs are paid much less and usually do not provide social security. Some would have possibly refused to take jobs such as cleaning in Greece, not only due to low remuneration and lack of social security but also due to the low social status associated with them. They stay abroad aiming to upgrade their language skills and build social networks that will help them to eventually find better jobs.

Many people start out by finding a job in Greek businesses –mostly restaurants– and then move on to other jobs. Some of them report exploitative working conditions: Andreas, who had worked in several Greek taverns, claimed that ‘he will never work for Greeks in the Netherlands again’. Yet people reported exploitative working relations with Dutch employers, too. Yorgos, who does not have a university education, came to Amsterdam looking for work in 2012. He found a job in the flower market but was very disillusioned from his emigration experience. His boss required him to stand still throughout the day, which physically exhausted him. He earned approximately 1200 euros a

month after taxes, the minimum wage in the Netherlands, which was much higher than any salary he ever had in Greece. The living costs were however much higher. Similarly to most newcomers, he could not afford renting an apartment on his own; he rented a room instead, costing him 400 euros. For these and similar reasons, not everybody decides to stay.. Some of the emigrants return triggered by job opportunities in Greece, but the majority because their migration experience turns out not to be according to their expectations.

A large part of the newcomers in Amsterdam are comprised of students at Dutch Universities who overstay after completing their studies. Many of them treat their studies as a first step to materialize their emigration. Chrysa came to Amsterdam with her boyfriend to follow an MA program in Political Science, but after her studies she could not find employment that matched her qualifications. Being unemployed for one year, she decided to work voluntarily in an organization which hired her after eight months of unpaid work. Achilleas, who had come for postgraduate studies in Social Sciences in Amsterdam, decided to prolong his stay, working in a big international hotel. However, after some time and having looked for job opportunities in his field, he felt that he had no chance of finding a job matching his qualifications in the near future, mainly due to insufficient knowledge of the language and a lack of social networks. Fully absorbed by the work rhythms of his hotel job, he felt that he was losing contact with his field of study. Although he was paid a salary he thinks he would not be able to achieve in Greece, he decided not to renew his contract. Prompted by a friend about the existence of job opportunities in his field in Greece, he started looking for a job related to his studies there, even if it would be a lower paid one. In a

follow-up discussion, Achilleas had managed to find a job related to his field of study on a three-month renewable contract with an NGO, and was preparing for his trip.

Lastly, there are cases of people who were already abroad for study and/or temporary work before 2009, and, although many were not originally planning to stay for long, found themselves were confronted with the dilemma 'to stay or return' as the crisis started deepening in Greece. Most of them do remain abroad since returning to Greece appears risky and others do so when they have acquired the skills, knowledge, and capital to make a new start in Greece. Such is the case of Dimitra, who returned in 2011 and managed to open her own business in out-of-school extracurricular education in their home city in Greece. For others, repatriation offers an alternative option in which non-financial motives are more important than financial ones. Niki studied music in De Haag from 2004 to 2012 while working in restaurants to financially support her studies. When she got her postgraduate diploma she returned to Greece, feeling rather disillusioned by her experience living in the Netherlands and missing her social life in Greece. She currently earns less than 200 euros a month giving music lessons, but she is much more satisfied with her life than when she was living in Den Haag. She recounted, however, that she had to defend her decision to friends in Greece who were critical of her on the basis of a rather idealistic image of life abroad. For Niki, her friends could not understand the difficulties and rather limited opportunities available to her to pursue a career in music in the Netherlands at a time of drastic cuts in state expenditures for culture, which had severely affected people working in the arts. For many who wished to leave

Greece, it seemed that she missed an opportunity that many of them felt they did not have.

Niki's experience also reveals that austerity policies alongside labour market developments significantly hamper employment opportunities in destination countries. At the same time, emigrants who do not have the 'right skills' are not particularly welcome in western European countries and their settlement is less than easy. In the Netherlands, for instance, one has to have a social security number in order to start a formal job. In order to have a social security number, however, one has to have a registered address, which could be difficult without an employment contract⁸. Additionally, banks refuse to issue accounts to non-Dutch who neither have a job nor are in the Netherlands for study reasons.

In a 2013 article, co-authored with the British campaigner for restrictions on immigration David Goodhart, the Dutch minister of social affairs and member of the Labour party Lodewijk Asscher, called the EU to rethink its commitment to the free movement of workers by highlighting what they considered to be its negative effects, namely wage dumping, exploitation and "crowding out" of local job seekers (Goodhart and Asscher 2013). Despite the fact that at that time the fear of massive influxes from Eastern Europe, on which the article focused, were proven to be overblown, the authors suggested that is time to signal 'Code Orange' alarm, the warning that's issued in the Netherlands when there's a serious risk of flooding. More evocatively, the 2012-2013 expulsions from Belgium of EU citizens on the grounds of their

⁸ People not being able to register their stay in the Netherlands can acquire a social security number by enrolling themselves in the registry of non-inhabitants, which is intended for temporary migrants and is officially valid for a period of four months.

constituting an excessive burden, as well as British PM David Cameron's assurances that the UK government has drawn plans for emergency immigration controls to curb a potential influx of Greeks (Watt 2012) if Greece is forced to leave euro, show that the right to free labour mobility in Europe for those not categorized as highly skilled is currently being practically contested and officially questioned in several countries of the EU.

5.1 Return migration and the development of transnational economic ties

In addition to the above-cited information gathered from the interviews with the emigrants in Amsterdam, we may derive some further information on return migration based on the data of the newdiaspora survey. For the majority of the respondents in this sample, all of whom had high educational credentials, their life abroad has met their expectations, and approximately three out of four evaluate their migration experience as a positive one. That is despite the fact that for many (40%) emigration brought about a deterioration in their social life. The vast majority however, report being very content as far as their employment conditions are concerned, particularly in terms of remuneration, prospects of career advancement, and relevance of their job to their educational background. Only 7% of the respondents were unemployed at the time of the research, and approximately two out of three of the respondents reported that they were never unemployed abroad. The majority of the informants found it neither easy nor difficult to access the labor market abroad, while the data, in accordance to those from the qualitative research in Amsterdam, indicate that the

graduates in social sciences, arts and humanities may experience more difficulties in finding a job. This is often due to lack of a high level of linguistic skills of the host country language – a level which is often essential for finding employment in those sectors– as well as due to more restricted job opportunities.

Despite their overall positive experiences abroad, however, half of the respondents had thought in the past or are currently thinking about the possibility of return. Similarly, in a hypothetical question of ‘where they would wish to live if they could find employment with similar conditions to those they currently have’, approximately half of the informants answered that they would go to Greece and 28% that they would share their time between Greece and their current country of residence. Expectedly, the respondents mentioned that they would return if they or their partners found a job that would satisfy them financially and/or a job that would match their skills (60%). A considerable number of people also mentioned that they would be willing to return to Greece if they felt that a significant change was underway in Greece (46%). That was also expressed in the answers of those respondents to the respective open question to which they mentioned a drive to contribute to the country, together with the wish to be closer to friends and family, as important reasons underlying their wish to return. Yet when the survey was conducted, only 15% of the respondents were planning to return within the next 2 years. For the majority, the socioeconomic conditions in Greece were considered particularly unfavorable to plan their return in the near future. However, most of the emigrants (64%) were more positive towards developing some kind of professional cooperation with

businesses, research centers, or other institutions in Greece, while 5% of them are already doing it.

As already earlier argued (Labrianidis 2014), the country can benefit from Greek professionals abroad without necessarily focusing on a repatriation policy. Rather, it could handle this valuable human capital under the assumption that, in the foreseeable future, it will remain abroad. Consequently, what should be done in the short- and medium-term emerges as a crucial challenge. Greece should recognise publicly and in the most formal way the fundamental value of this human capital. Concomitantly, it should facilitate the establishment of any possible means of cooperation between these people abroad and their home country. Some of them might decide, for a particular period, to combine work in both places. Even from afar, through meaningful collaborations between private businesses, universities, research centers, or even through the creation of their own businesses, Greek professionals could contribute to the transfer of know-how to Greece.

In this way, Greece would benefit from the knowledge and experience these individuals possess, while, they would be able to enjoy 'the best of both worlds': they could continue to live and work abroad, but at the same time they would be able to have some sort of activity in Greece, which they would visit regularly on professional missions. This situation could serve as the 'bridge' that, in the future, might bring them back, with indisputable positive results for the Greek economy and society in general.

6. Conclusion

After a period in which immigration to Greece has monopolised public attention, media discourses, state policies and academic research—and rightly so—a shift appears to be underway as emigration is back in the agenda. Shrinking opportunities and life chances have pushed many Greeks out of the country, especially youth, persons with higher educational attainments, as well as increasingly people in need. At the dawn of the new millennium, the crisis signals a complexification or even a turnaround of Greece’s migration transition, as emigration flows in the post-2010 period appear to be comparable in size with those of post-war decades yet with significant differences from those taking place in previous decades. Even though the majority of the migrants are young university graduate adults, the emigrant population overall is considerably more diverse than that of previous decades. The emigrants are people of various income groups, educational backgrounds and specializations and of various age groups. They are heading to a wide array of destinations spanning the globe, with the EU, and particularly Britain and Germany, attracting the bulk of them.

Free movement within the EU makes emigration an easier mobility strategy to pursue, as people increasingly move spontaneously and provisionally, looking for potential opportunities mostly in Western and Northern Europe. At the same time people are not supported by state institutions in their emigration trajectories as was the case in the post-war period, and their socio-economic background and social capital shape their emigration trajectories. These, in turn, like the backgrounds

of migrants themselves, are characterized by considerable diversity. People specialized in fields for which there is high demand can easily secure employment abroad, in many cases even before they actually emigrate. However, people with lower education, or education that is not valued highly in the labour market of their destination countries, or for which fluency in the language of that country is needed, find it much more difficult to find employment that matches their qualifications. If they lack the necessary economic resources to invest further in their training and education or to support themselves until they build their social networks in the receiving country and better their language skills, they may end up working for extended periods in jobs below their skills.

Through time, however, the broad picture is one of progress, as the vast majority of the migrants eventually do upgrade their living conditions while acquiring new experiences, skills and knowledge. They constitute an extremely valuable human capital resource for the Greek society and economy upon which the Greek governments could capitalize. In the current circumstances, this could not be done focusing on a repatriation policy, since return within the near future forms not a plan neither a wish for most of them. Rather, it could be accomplished by facilitating the establishment of means of cooperation, which could lead to development of viable and sustained transnational ties between them and the Greek society and economy.

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