GREEK DIASPORA PROJECT

Workshop report

Diaspora and development: The case of Greece

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Introduction: The Greek Diaspora Project

Othon Anastasakis, Principal Investigator (PI) of the Greek Diaspora Project (GDP) at SEESOX, introduced the themes, objectives and methodology of the multiannual research venture. The GDP aims to examine the interaction between Greeks abroad and crisis-ridden Greece and their actual and potential impact in the fields of the economy, politics and philanthropy. In order to achieve this aim, the GDP produces conceptual, comparative and analytical work, primary research, and policy relevant recommendations. The GDP seeks to create synergy in Europe and other parts of the world where the Greek diaspora is located (USA, Canada, Australia, Russia, S. Africa and beyond), so networking with other institutions is an important component of the project. The project’s team also holds the ambition to extend the project regionally, encompassing other South East European diasporas and their impact on their countries’ development.

In terms of the project’s approach, it is historical insofar as the past offers a contemporary understanding of Greeks abroad and their interaction with their homeland. It is also multidisciplinary, comparative, and driven by primary research. A key example of this is the conducting of surveys of diaspora attitudes towards the homeland, starting with a survey on Greeks in the UK and expanding it to other countries with prominent Greek diaspora communities.

The project aims at establishing a commission entrusted with the mission of engaging in evidence-gathering through hearings, meetings and expert interviews. This commission will publish a white paper distilling policy recommendations unique to the relationship between Greece and its diaspora.

Among its most ambitious goals, the GDP is preparing a digital map/interactive platform depicting diaspora organisations and media.
The aim of this platform will be to facilitate research on the diaspora as much as the interaction between diaspora and homeland, as well as diaspora actors themselves.

Anastasakis also highlighted some indicative themes which the project will be exploring in the fields of the economy, politics and philanthropy. For instance, in the economic field, Greece is a country for which diaspora remittances are of declining importance. However, other issues such as transfer of knowhow, market access and entrepreneurial networking, all via the diaspora, are connected to the vital efforts of Greek policy makers and economic stakeholders to boost the international competitiveness of the Greek economy. In politics, the study of political participation involves the assessment of the diaspora as a political and technocratic actor from abroad, and how this relates to the country’s contentious reform efforts. Finally philanthropy, very much connected with the role of the diaspora during the creation and evolution of independent Greece in the 19th century, has become resonant once again, particularly so at a time when state budgetary cuts create spaces of opportunity for high impact, diaspora philanthropic giving in public goods such as health, culture and education.

Next, Antonis Kamaras, GDP associate and representative of the project in Greece, proceeded with a short analysis of the current state of existing literature. He argued that there has been a decades-long omission in the involvement of scholars and policy makers in the issue of how the Greek diaspora engages with Greece’s developmental trajectory. His presentation examined this lacuna through the prism of three interdependent angles: first the perspective of Europe; second the study of the diaspora elites; and third the diaspora’s increasing power of agency in Greece.

On the first point he argued that Greece’s accession to the European Community has been a decisive factor in the scarcity of policy oriented studies on the Greek diaspora and the motherland. The transfer of EU funds stemmed Greek migration to Western Europe and lessened commensurably the importance of already declining remittances of post-WW II Greek migrants. Consequently, the Greek research community focused on the EU as the main locus of funding and its corollaries, values and knowledge, for the Greek state, economy and society.

From a second perspective, the Greek Diaspora scholarship has failed to notice that diaspora elites were a constitutive element of Greece’s Europeanization project, influential actors in Greece’s public and policy discourse, and active philanthropists (particularly in Greek education, culture and the arts). Commencing with the market reforms induced by Greece’s entry to the euro, Greek bankers and corporate lawyers, mostly residing in the City of London, have played a crucial role in the management of expanding access to money and the capital markets of the Hellenic Republic. Since the 1990’s, particularly with the advent of the internet, diaspora academics have been increasingly prominent in some of Greece’s most contentious public
debates - ranging from the Greek civil war to the more recent contestation around whether to assign blame to the creditors or to Greek governments for the country's failure to exit the memoranda. Last but not least, philanthropic organisations founded by Greek ship-owning families have become major actors in Greece's culture and the arts. Their funding processes, their commissioning of public works and their internal operations and governance are discreetly different from those of the Greek state or of wholly home-grown, non-profit organisations.

It is therefore necessary that the research community addresses the diaspora's increasing power of agency vis a vis the Greek polity, economy and society. The diaspora can now be the demandeur as the Greek state, due to its fiscal straits, has been discredited in local communities which have to fend for themselves and may reconnect with their diaspora brethren. The tens of thousands of recently emigrated individuals demand vocally active political participation, and in Greece’s ageing society and bankrupt pension system, their voices carry extra weight. Finally diaspora investors are important players as the Greek economy strives to shift its emphasis from state to private investment.

Robin Cohen, Professor of Development Studies, Oxford, began in his remarks by challenging the assumption that the state can command the loyalty of its diaspora. This assumes the unity of the state and the diaspora. But diasporas, the Greek case included, are intermittently loyal to their home states and develop complex relationships with communities, families, and neighbourhoods, not necessarily involving the state itself. Therefore, an initial challenge is that of capturing the complexity of this situation, and identifying what loyalties can be commanded by the state. Moreover, when looking at spatial concentrations outside Greece, it is important to understand how these spaces - in terms of family, financial and cultural flows - connect to each other, as well as to the homeland. Cohen noted that it used to be the case that a country has a population that disperses and it re-gathers. Now instead people are starting to connect through a variety of experiences, ranging from summer vacations to professional collaboration. These types of engagement with the homeland are less than return, but more than disengagement.

In the discussion that followed, the point was made that diaspora financial resources, depending on their country of origin, carry different values, methods and strategies. Therefore when we look at diaspora entrepreneurs investing in the Greek economy, and active in Greek political and civic life, we also have to analyse how host country features of diaspora entrepreneurs are shaping their pattern of interaction with Greece. Indicatively there are significant differences separating Greek-Americans from Greek-Russians due to the very distinct US and Russian business cultures and institutions shaping business behaviour. It was also noted that research should look at studies on previous diaspora waves in the 1960s-
70s, not only from Greece but also from Turkey and elsewhere, and in particular examining the interaction between return patterns and home country conditions, as in the case of Turkey during the high growth period of the 2000s.

The potential of the GDP’s digital map project was also discussed by participants. Would it be a participatory map where diaspora entities can register and make their links visible to other groups? Or would this be something that GDP map administrators would do by themselves? A map project in Vienna for refugees which visualises local services and has a participatory aspect to it was offered as a comparable project worthy of study. With regard to the digital map, it was noted that such an exercise inevitably turns the GDP into a political actor, because simply by making the diaspora aware of its worldwide organisational expression, it enhances the ability of diaspora communities and actors to coordinate between themselves and with homeland entities.

Other important observations regarded the cultural and social interactions of the wider diaspora communities, not just of diaspora elites, and the impact of the Church on diaspora identity. From the GDP’s perspective, the focus in its philanthropy and volunteerism pillar on diaspora elite participation seeks to redress a bias in the literature in favour of the average immigrant, which has resulted in the underestimation of both the actual and the potential impact of diaspora elites in Greek political and civil life. As for religion, the role of the Greek Orthodox Church will be very high on the research agenda of the GDP.

Session I: Brain Drain Dynamics

In contrast to the rather limited public discussion about the actual and potential impact of the Greek diaspora on the country’s socioeconomic development at times of crisis, considerable attention has been paid on the new major wave of out-migration from Greece and the concomitant formation of new diasporic communities across Europe and beyond. Since 2010, more than 400,000 Greek citizens have left the country. Approximately two-thirds of the outflow comprises of university graduates, a phenomenon that has spurred public concern about the negative impacts of the on-going brain drain on Greece’s economy and society.

Manolis Pratsinakis, Marie Curie researcher at the University of Macedonia and Onassis/SEESOX fellow for the Greek Diaspora Project, identified two misconceptions in this debate in his presentation. Firstly, crisis-driven emigration is presented as exclusively pertaining to the young and the educated, and the emigration of older people, the less well educated, or minority groups is often neglected. Secondly, the emigration of the highly skilled is presented as a new phenomenon resulting from the crisis, whilst the underlying structural causes of the phenomenon, relating to nepotism and the labour market’s focus on the production of low-cost products and services, are not addressed.

Due to these structural weaknesses the Greek economy has been unable to take advantage of the presence of a
highly educated workforce, and even before the crisis many highly educated people were leaving the country in search of employment that corresponded to their qualifications. What differs, however, in present circumstances is the sheer size of the phenomenon. In addition, while most pre-crisis emigrants saw their emigration as a career step and planned eventually to return to Greece, only a minority of the post-2010 migrants view their emigration in that way. Most of them feel they lack any prospects in their home country, feelings which often go hand in hand with a deep disillusionment with the Greek political establishment and state institutions.

The departure of these individuals could be detrimental for the longer term development potential of Greece. Yet in the literature views on this issue are divided, Pratsinakis noted. On the one hand, there are those who argue that the international migration of professionals massively erodes the human capital and fiscal revenues of sending countries, driving them into a spiral of underdevelopment. On the other hand, there are those who argue that the international migration of professionals may act as a potent force for developing the economy of sending countries through remittances, trade, direct foreign investment, and knowledge transfer. Even though the limits to the ability of diasporas to bring about political-economic change and social transformation should be taken into account against simplistic views that fit into currently dominant neoliberal development paradigms, their positive impact can be very significant.

Given that return to Greece is not something most emigrants are planning in the current circumstances, the focus of state policy should be the establishment of different means of cooperation with them. However in view of the generalized reservations among expatriates towards state institutions, policy aims should not be framed in such a way as patronizing Greeks abroad, but rather as collaborators in a common mission. The approach needs also to be as inclusive as possible, addressing older expatriate communities and lower skilled migrants, recognizing their existing contributions and support, starting from the fact that they are the ones most likely to be sending remittances back home. Such an approach should thus include interventions and measures that support initiatives abroad empowering low skilled emigrants, as well as better-educated Greeks abroad who are facing difficulties. The smoother the adjustment of emigrants to their new homelands, the greater their willingness and ability to contribute to Greece is likely to be. In relation to the more highly educated migrants, existing bottom-up initiatives need be supported not only as a means of recognizing their contributions, but also as a way of identifying the areas in which expatriates perceive opportunities or the need for action, and as an optimal way of connecting and expanding relations with them.

In conclusion, Pratsinakis identified some of the challenges of conducting research on this topic. He cautioned
that diaspora academic experts, similarly to diaspora policy ‘entrepreneurs’, may be in fact co-constituting the phenomenon under examination by their very research practice. How can the political goals of the SEESOX Greek Diaspora Project (mobilizing the Greek diaspora in affecting Greece's political and economic transformation) be best balanced with the academic considerations of doing research on the matters at hand?

In terms of contextualizing Greek brain drain/gain dynamics, most of the evidence in the literature on brain drain/gain comes from research conducted in developing countries. However, there are several European countries that experience significant outflows of professionals with which Greece shares a number of common socioeconomic and political characteristics. The freedom of mobility in EU provides a unique context that necessitates particular attention. We need to interrogate whether the mobility options granted to Greek citizens by the EU-wide freedom of movement also help create transnational social spaces that might compensate in economic, political and civic terms for the costs of the ‘exit’ from Greece.

Elizabetta Zontini, University of Nottingham, started by noting the parallels between Greece and Italy, with 300,000 Italians having left their country between 2009-2012, 30% of them highly skilled. However, she added that emigration had already started prior to this, from the early 1990s, so it has not been exclusively crisis induced. In contrast to Greece, the Italian state has been more involved with its diaspora. Italy is connected with its communities abroad through state institutions, political parties, and regional governments. However this institutional nexus had been built for the old diaspora, mainly factory and unskilled workers. Moreover, although Italians abroad can vote, the representatives that get elected originate from, and represent, the post-war migration, while the new emigrant wave has not yet promoted and selected its own candidates. Italian migrants have traditionally benefitted from a strong network of associations connected with Catholic Church, trade unionism or with localities and regions in Italy. Today new associations are emerging, mainly on the web and social media, some of which are pointing out the deficiencies of the Italian political system or lobbying for a more meritocratic academic system in Italy.

Franck Duvell, from the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS) at the University of Oxford, pointed out that in fact emigration leads to acquisition of experience and new knowledge, enhancing the brain (brain-gain). Emigrants also enjoy better pay, they tend to be employed for their skills, and even when they are working at positions below their potential, they still have higher wages, so there is a gain for the individual migrant. In view of these realities, some countries are even deliberately producing skills in order to export them to destination countries. He also noted that the concept of brain drain neglects the perspective of “temporality”. Brain drain as a concept tends to be associated with a rather short-term perspective and
that is why, when we examine the phenomenon, we should look at previous waves as well and the return patterns which they gave rise to. People at some point may return, so we cannot say for certain that the brain drain is going to last.

A point which was raised during discussion was that we need to take into account Greece's demographics when estimating the brain drain / brain gain calculus. By 2050, 40% of the population is expected to be over 60 years old, so those who have left will not pay social security and the Greek state will be even more fiscally unable to support the elderly.

Caution was encouraged towards the idealisation of the Greek diaspora's positive contribution to the homeland’s exit from the crisis, given that the latest emigrants do not yet necessarily perceive themselves as such, i.e. as those that will provide best practices, invest in Greece and so on. Therefore, the GDP’s approach should identify distinct diasporic communities and investigate what different kinds of agencies these diaspora groups might possess or discover.

The group discussed the technical challenges of surveying the new emigration waves, given that one of the missions of the GDP is to produce primary findings through survey work. Some methodological problems involve questions such as ‘How does one approach a community that does not have clear representatives, clear channels and spaces of collective action?’ Organisational structures that were developed in previous migration waves, such as the church or the homeland locale of origin-based structures, are not relevant for the new migration wave. The group proposed some suggestions such as the use of professional and university based networks, given that the new diaspora is more educated and tends to socialise around their professional and educational affiliations, such as doctors, engineers, alumni of particular high schools, and so on. Another approach would be to focus on city based networks as many new emigrants in European cities try to locate their co-nationals, sign up for news in restaurants, or inquire back in Greece who among their wider circle lives in their European city of choice. Considering that there is a type of self-aggregating/self-selection dynamics to these choices and trends, the surveying and analytical challenge is to identify these dynamics and ensure that no groups which are excluded from them are left unrecorded.

In response to the discussion, the research entry point of brain drain / brain gain that was identified was the study of the outflow of professions from Greece and its contextualisation within crisis-driven emigration. It was also mentioned that the Greek Diaspora Project will conduct questionnaire-based surveys on the recent emigrant wave. These surveys will examine issues relevant to the Project’s research remit such as willingness and ability to engage with Greece, experiences abroad, socioeconomic situation, and values held, in terms of how they differ within the diaspora and how they relate to Greece.

It was also acknowledged that there are distinct research alternatives, such as micro- versus macro-stories
and the anthropological approach versus the economists’ big-data approach. Such choices must inevitably be made.

**Session II: Political Participation**

The second session discussed the Greek diaspora and its participation in Greece's public life and was presented by Othon Anastasakis and Lamprini Rori, SEESOX/A.G. Leventis fellow. The traditional way of approaching Greek diasporas has been through “long distance nationalism”, dominated by the notion of national interest and the promotion of homeland causes entered on foreign and national security policy. In the economic domain, diaspora-relevant state institutions have been mostly focusing on maximizing remittances. In its more recent history the Greek state adopted relevant clauses in the constitution, as well as some mechanisms of engaging with its diaspora, for example:

- Article 108 of the 1975 Greek constitution, which refers for the first time to the Greek diaspora as Hellenism that requires interest from the Greek state.
- The 1983 creation of the General Secretariat of Hellenism Abroad, with the mission of catering for Greeks abroad in the fields of education, conferences, cultural events etc. and coordinating and organizing state diaspora policies.
- The 1995 creation of the Council of Greeks Abroad with its basis in Thessaloniki.
- The founding of new institutions in the post-communist 1990s for the repatriation of Greeks from the Soviet Union and North Epirus in Albania, in order to manage their integration into the Greek polity and society.

It is important to note that there is no right for Greeks abroad to vote for national elections. Since the 1970s, the diasporic voting behaviour traditionally has been clientelistic and party politicized, based on the party-funded transportation of voters through the use of the then state-owned carrier, Olympic Airlines. As such the diasporic vote was divided between the two big parties, PASOK and New Democracy.

The financial crisis and its economic repercussions have increased the flow of exit and thus the potential political significance of the Greek diaspora. That said, two main observations can be made.

The first observation regards the low motivation of the crisis-driven emigrants to engage politically with Greece: once one takes the decision to exit the country, one has less incentive to interfere with the Greek reality which one decided to leave.

The second observation relates to an anti-bailout political narrative featuring conspiracy, nationalist and anti-elite perceptions of (a) crisis fabricated by external forces in order to sell Greece’s property to multinationals, (b) victimhood at the individual and national level (c) cold-blooded technocrats, experts and intellectuals who propose irrelevant cookie-cutter solutions irrelevant to the Greek reality. These perceptions
do not leave the diaspora and homeland relationship untouched. Envy and resentment build stereotypes for Greeks both living in Greece and abroad. Greeks living abroad are frequently perceived as “well-off”, “rescued”, “not having sense or comprehension of how people in the homeland make ends meet”. The “outsiders” may hold stereotyped views of the “insiders” as incapable of pursuing another life abroad, as lazy, and agents of a rent-seeking, clientelistic and frequently corrupt mentality are also present in the narrative of the expatriates.

Countervailing forces to these obstacles are:

- The financial strength of diaspora Greeks which enables them to be active players in the inflow of foreign capital, which has become a top priority of Greece’s official creditors.

- Strong support among Greek parties of the centre left and centre right or among some media, for a meaningful diaspora contribution to Greece’s exit from the crisis.

Some indicative questions posed, in the context of this brief outline are:

- How can the different diasporas engage with the Greek crisis and relate to each other with regard to Greece? Can they benefit from the possibilities existing through information and communications technology to institutionalize a horizontal bridge between them?

Nicholas Van Hear, Deputy Director of COMPAS, Oxford, injected a word of caution on the congruence between politics and ideas between the diaspora and those back home. As an extreme case he mentioned the Palestinian example, where in the Oslo Accord negotiations participating diaspora individuals who had not been in Palestine for years rather incredibly had forgotten, or did not know, the geography of the West Bank.

Van Hear also emphasised the disaggregation of diaspora engagement with the homeland at three levels: first, the extended family (as the most common and constant form of diaspora-homeland engagement); second, the imagined community (the nation as the largest unit that one claims affiliation to); and, thirdly, the meso-level, the familiar communities, neighbours, schools, work places, sports clubs, cultural and religious groups and activities.

Maria Koinova, Principal Investigator of the European Research Council funded project “Diasporas and Contested Sovereignty” at the University of Warwick, relayed her expertise on diaspora relations toward conflict or post-conflict states (such as Iraq and Bosnia). She talked about the importance of institution-
building across all levels of government in the diaspora and homeland relationship, which the development literature has been grappling with. Koinova emphasised the role of individuals and the skills sets, tactics and strategies that make a diaspora actor effective or not, and the extent to which such qualities can be generalised and connected with policy making. She underlined that context is important in the sense that diasporas are embedded in the particular spaces, cities and networks in which they function, providing opportunities as well as constraints on how they engage with their homeland. She also spoke of the need to theorise about the notion of positionality - how is a diaspora entrepreneur encouraged by the local context and/or how does positionality between the host-state and home-state shape the ability of a diaspora actor to make a contribution?

Lea Muller Funck, OxPo visiting research fellow at the Department of Politics and International Relations, Oxford University, made references to Egyptian diaspora politics in European capitals during the recent revolutionary and post-revolutionary period. Her operating term is “transnational political networks”, a non-normative concept that pays attention to networks related to national origins. Her research modus operandi is to find these networks, interview the most prominent actors and then follow their presence on social media. Muller Funck’s main finding is that diaspora politics are often directed towards both the country of origin and the receiving country. In the case of Egypt, diaspora actors had three main strategies for influencing politics in Egypt: first, they offered symbolic support for activists in Egypt by being visible in the public sphere in the receiving country; second, they sought to influence public opinion by inciting debates and by connecting to political actors and civil society organizations in the receiving country; and third, they provided the European – and sometimes Egyptian – public with alternative information about Egypt. The most successful diaspora activists were those who managed to find allies in the receiving country by attaching their cause to a bigger political cause, such as human rights issues, social justice and Christian minorities in the Middle East.

Pavlos Eleftheriadis, Associate Professor in the Faculty of Law, Oxford, talked about his personal experience as a diaspora scholar increasingly active in national politics of his homeland, where he ran as an parliamentary candidate in Greece and was involved in his party’s governance and policy deliberations. He underlined that it is very easy nowadays to keep in touch (via email, video calls, Facebook, Twitter etc) with Greece, so he could regularly interact with party colleagues in Greece and participate in party deliberations as if he were a resident. On the other hand this ability to communicate and interact did not necessarily translate into bridging the mental maps between those politicians abroad and those in the homeland.

Discussion on political participation reviewed longer trends, such as the progressive or regressive character of Greece’s diaspora communities and
what this implies for the nature of their involvement with Greece. It was pointed out that historically, and even prior to the foundation of the Greek state, the diaspora was the agent and conduit of some progressive ideas of nation building in Greece. Having said that, diaspora communities shaped in the 20th century where distance was considerable and families were not able to go back to Greece so often, as in the case of Greek migration to Australia in the 1950s, were committed to a nostalgia-shaped Greece and thus alienated by the exposure to the Greece they rediscovered decades hence.

More generally, it was pointed out that diasporas are not necessarily one or the other, progressive or regressive, and that apart from the specificities and diversities within the diasporas themselves, attitudes and outlooks can change over time. The new wave of the Italian diaspora is such a case, with younger, urban, better educated Italian emigrants having a different outlook to the older Italian diaspora communities. Nevertheless, it was also pointed that we should not conceptualise diaspora features exclusively in terms of waves and generations, and adopt more fluid and time-compressed demarcations. Finally, it was mentioned that in surveying particular diaspora communities the Greek Diaspora Project would not limit itself to measuring party identification, but also examine the underlying value systems of diaspora communities, the factors that shape them, and how they compare with the changing value system of the population in the homeland during the crisis.

**Session III: Philanthropy and Volunteerism**

The third session discussed philanthropy and volunteerism, and the obstacles and politics that define the diaspora’s role and capacity to make a difference in the country’s public and non-profit sectors. Antonis Kamaras started by stating that philanthropy and volunteerism constitute an issue of mutually reinforcing demand and supply constraints. He argued that there are public and private demand constrains in Greece. More specifically, following the 2011 educational reform more than a hundred Greek academics from overseas were elected members and even presidents of newly founded boards of the state universities in Greece. This development undercut the position of Greek University faculty who had previously parlayed alliances with student unions to dominate the leadership ranks of Greece’s universities, despite in some cases the lack of a distinguished scholarly record. Thus resistance to the diaspora-filled boards can be found across the political spectrum of university faculties in Greece but it is more prominent, according to Kamaras, among the far left faculty for a combination of ideological and career profile reasons.

Another institutional conflict demonstrates that the pro- and anti-diaspora philanthropy and volunteerism split goes beyond the traditional public versus private or the left versus right divisions. A typical example is Athens College, which has been ruled by two boards since its foundation, one headquartered in New York and one in Athens, the latter initiating an effort in 2007 to
eliminate the influence of the New York board. On the one side stood a group of residents of Athens for whom control of Athens College and of its legacy admissions policy, privileging entry of alumni children, was de facto a source of significant social influence. On the other side stood a group of mostly Greek-Americans, with less incentive in enhancing Athenian social influence due to their non-resident status, and associating their effort to maintain their governance role at Athens College with a meritocratic and modernisation agenda.

These demand constraints in Greece interact with supply constraints in the diaspora as in the case of Greek-American philanthropists. The unwillingness to invite the input and participation of the Greek-American diaspora has meant that Greece has had minimal influence on the evolution of Greek-Americans. This vacuum has been filled in the US by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and by US-relevant giving. An investigation of Greek-American patterns of philanthropic giving reveals (a) a pattern of donations directed towards church related activities in the US and to the Patriarchate in Constantinople and (b) a number of Greek-Americans, usually highly educated, involved in sectors such as high technology and entertainment, that have opted out of the traditional Orthodox Church charitable vehicles, while being generous donors to other causes irrelevant to Greece.

Kamaras offered two alternative categories on how to mitigate these demand and supply constraints. The first category comes from the world of ship-owners. Ship-owners have personal and professional lives lived both in Greece and abroad. They have genuine stakes in Greece due to their constitutionally protected tax amnesty, their sourcing of crews and management teams, and their investment in non-shipping sectors in Greece. They have also attained a level of wealth that places them amongst the global financial elite and they live for long periods of time in places such as London, Geneva, Monaco or New York. Ship-owners thus have the local motives and the know-how to become important philanthropists in Greece. They also bring their philanthropic enterprise to Greece with the kind of operational excellence and best practice to which they are exposed to internationally. The second category is Greek Americans who are board members of US institutions operating in Greece, such as Deree and Anatolia Colleges or the Archaeological School of Athens. According to Kamaras, these institutions offer to their Greek-American Trustees high quality US governance standards, a long track record of navigating the intricacies of operating in Greece, in addition to the possibility of making a tangible contribution to Greek society.

Richard Clogg, Professor of History and Emeritus fellow of St Antony’s College, highlighted the effort of UK universities to attract scarce Greek donor funds, diaspora and non-diaspora, for Byzantine and Modern Greek studies. He argued that particularly in the present juncture Greek diaspora funding should be directed mainly at Greek universities and at subject matters that are directly relevant to the crisis.
Iryna Lapshyna, Senior Researcher at COMPAS, Oxford, in her discussant’s comments asked for a more detailed investigation of the Athens College conflict, in terms of motivation, board composition and the issues at stake. She also related the Greek experience to the Ukrainian case, where the diaspora is negatively perceived as “didactic and superior”, as not helping economically, and that they might even be perceived as treasonous towards their own country. Lapshyna also questioned the focus of Greek philanthropy on wealthy donors, pointing out that while in the past philanthropy was associated with wealthy industrial donors, more recently many middle-income and even low-income individuals donate money and resources for philanthropic causes. She related this trend to her own research findings on the Ukrainian diaspora, where those born in poverty that then succeed are more likely to donate and that relatively poor and middle-income individuals make considerable contributions to charities. In particular the revolution in Ukraine in 2013 has had a profound impact on the Ukrainian community in UK and Poland with both communities demonstrating the ambition, willingness and resources to contribute to the development of Ukraine. This is not a monopoly of the wealthy or highly skilled or intellectual diaspora; instead all diaspora groups make contributions to the home country. Many unskilled and even undocumented migrants try to contribute, for instance through humanitarian aid.

Dimitris Tziovas, Professor of Modern Greek Studies of the University of Birmingham, analysed in depth the Greek-American diaspora’s allegiance to a notion of Hellenism that relates to Greece’s classical tradition but not so much with contemporary Greece. Tziovas also referred to past failed attempts, mainly by the Greek state and /or Greek state institutions, such as the Council of the World’s Hellenes and the Institute for the Cooperation of Scientists, to effectively institutionalise diaspora and homeland relations. Tziovas encouraged us to explore other forms of institutionalising diaspora and homeland interactions, not necessarily involving the Greek state, but instead mostly private actors.

On the subject of diaspora’s commitment, via philanthropy and volunteerism, the importance of contingency in the shaping of major events ranging from the cataclysmic to the transformative, was stressed. This includes the case of the reanimated Armenian diaspora in the wake of the major earthquake in Armenia in 1988, this natural disaster occurring just prior to post-Soviet independence. Another indicative example is that of Chinese Americans who long avoided connecting with the motherland until Nixon made his opening to China in 1972, after which they started articulating themselves as a community. The Jewish Holocaust and the developments of a “survivors’ guilt” made Jewish-American philanthropic engagement with Israel both unique and non-replicable amongst other diaspora communities.

An interesting example of diaspora volunteerism that was mentioned
was diaspora diplomacy undertaken by internationally recognised diaspora figures from the world of arts and sports. Important personalities in their field utilise their wide recognition and their time and endorsement in the service of homeland causes.

Finally, a participant criticised Kamaras’ binary driven analysis of diaspora as modernising, standards-driven philanthropists and volunteers, versus home country opponents with a retrograde and clientelist agenda. In particular, the disinterestedness of diaspora actors was questioned and it was posited that the drive for public recognition either outside Greece or in Greece might be what explains diaspora involvement, and not determination to advance a modernisation agenda which, in and by itself, could also be subjected to critical scrutiny. In the same vein, the Greek academic diaspora’s assumed superior professional ethos and cultural norms, demonstrated through their engagement with the governance of Greek state universities, was also considered problematic.

Assuming that philanthropic and volunteer engagement in the US is fuelled by a diversity of motives, including self-interest such as network building and social recognition, it is important to question whether there are strong normative expectations shaping the way this engagement will be actualised in Greece, in terms of continued adherence to such concepts as fiduciary responsibility, meritocracy and best governance practices. Similarly, are Greek academics from elite universities in Western Europe and North America, in their involvement with Greek state universities, engaged in a transfer of best governance and organisational practices? Or do they become enmeshed in the pathologies of Greek higher education, reproducing, through their own distinct contribution, these pathologies?

On the subject matter of focusing on elite donors and volunteers versus donors and volunteers across the socioeconomic spectrum, it needs to be established whether Greece, even amidst a severe economic crisis, can resemble countries like Ukraine which are engaged in military conflict and thus able to generate mobilisation across the socioeconomic hierarchy in the diaspora community. If this is not the case, then it is incumbent to assess the impact of elite volunteerism and philanthropy by the diaspora, the choices it privileges, and the legitimacy it might or might not enjoy, in such domains of public interest as culture, education, health and social services and the Third Sector at large.
Ten key points

Reviewing the presentations and the minutes of the workshop, we selected ten indicative points that emerged which we consider to be of future benefit and relevance to the research focus of the Greek Diaspora Project:

1. As per Kalypso Nicolaidis’ final commentary, the questions of how, who, why and when, are very important framing research devices. How do we connect time to the formation of outlook and the initiation of action by the diaspora in relation to the homeland? Who among the diaspora interacts with the homeland and under what conception of the self and the diaspora group to which he or she belongs? Why and for what reason and incentive does this interaction take place, out of what commitments does it spring? And when does action become implemented and is or is not rendered effective? Does it involve networks, is the homeland state able to shape and direct the interaction, do the particularities of the Greek crisis combine with the realities of present day diasporic existence in particularly noteworthy ways, or they do so on the basis of well-recognised, global paradigms?

2. The power and ability of contingency to shape diaspora attitudes towards the homeland and thus the diaspora and homeland relationship. Thus it is incumbent upon us to look, through a comparative exercise, at whether the powerful contingency represented by Greece’s severe economic crisis has a similar capacity to that of other cases mentioned to transform the outlook and interaction of the Greek diaspora communities with their homeland.

3. The diverse modes of engagement of diaspora actors with the homeland, be they intermittent or periodical, family-driven or professional and associational, and the three spheres of interaction, namely the micro-, meso- and macro-national levels.

4. The exploration of positionality, of the skills and entry points which make for successful impact by diaspora actors on their homelands, and the utilisation of political influence in pursuit of economic aims.

5. The evaluation of freedom of movement within the EU as a key aspect of brain drain/gain dynamics. The policies both of the EU and the level of a member country like Greece can shape one of the Union’s four freedoms, such that it continues to address the needs and rights of the individual EU citizen and of the receiving but particularly of the crisis-hit homeland countries. Relatedly, the temporality of exodus and return, as illuminated by other diaspora wave episodes.

6. The comparative character of the Greek Diaspora Project, focusing on particular countries of Southern Europe and of Central and Eastern Europe, and the distinct research angles that different comparator groups can bring forward. Relatedly, the issue of whether policy instruments created for developing countries by transnational organisations, such as the World Bank, are appropriate for a country like Greece and, if so, what are the obstacles in being perceived as such by Greek actors.
7. The question **what capacity does the Greek diaspora have, old and new, for cross-border mobilisation in receiving countries?** Moreover, whether the economic crisis itself is sufficient to activate or create such cross-border networks. The strategies and effectiveness of such cross-border mobilisations in receiving countries in terms of effecting change in the homeland.

8. The distinction between a **progressive or a regressive diaspora** and indeed what it means to be one or the other. Relatedly the issue of the formation of identities of particular diaspora communities, such as the Greek-American community, and whether such identities hinder or facilitate, and under what conditions, interaction with the homeland.

9. The **interaction between the debtor and creditor relationship and the diaspora’s political impact on policymaking and the economy.** Relatedly, the way the diaspora and homeland relationship might be refracted through the creditor and debtor, foreign and indigenous relationships.

10. The issue of **whether emphasis on upper level professionals and the extremely wealthy, in terms of diaspora volunteerism and philanthropy in Greece, is justified.** If indeed it is, does elite involvement in philanthropy and volunteerism by the diaspora privilege particular choices in the public domain and does it raises issues of legitimacy?
Programme

The aim of the workshop is to discuss how diasporas engage with home-countries in socioeconomic crisis with a special emphasis on the case of Greece. The working premise of the workshop is that Greece, in order to meet its developmental challenge and escape the systemic crisis that still bedevils it, needs to mobilize all available resources: in order to renew its institutional foundations, create an internationally competitive economy and restore its severely undermined international stature. Many of these resources either exist in the Greek Diaspora or are being dissipated through the ongoing brain drain phenomenon. The workshop will examine this premise, conceptually and comparatively, by looking at three themes: brain drain/brain gain dynamics; political participation; and philanthropy.

Introduction of the project

Presentation of the project by Othon Anastasakis & Antonis Kamaras
Comments by Robin Cohen

SESSION I: Brain drain dynamics

Introductory presentation by Manolis Pratsinakis
Comments by Franck Duvell, Elisabetta Zontini
Chair: Eirini Karamouzis

Following the outbreak of the economic crisis in 2009, Greece is experiencing yet another major wave of out-migration, this time composed predominantly of highly skilled professionals. Greece has long postponed the move from a low-cost to a knowledge-based economy, despite the fact that since the 1990s a significant upward trend in higher education studies was observed in the country. As a result, the Greek economy has been unable to take advantage of the presence of a highly educated workforce and even before the crisis significant numbers of highly educated people left the country in search of employment that corresponded to their qualifications and career ambitions. Yet it is during the crisis that the ongoing brain drain has acquired alarming proportions, triggered by a sudden aggravation of the unfavorable conditions in the national labour market that were already acting as push factors. The first session will discuss:

- What policies may be implemented in the shorter, medium and longer term as a means of alleviating the negative consequences of the phenomenon, and potentially turning the situation into an opportunity for the restructuring of the country in the future?
- What can scholars on Greece, policy makers and non-state Greek stakeholders learn from other countries which have experienced meaningful brain circulation processes and /or have sought to effect and compound the impact of brain circulation in their economies and institutions?

SESSION II: Political participation

Introductory presentation by Othon Anastasakis and Lamprini Rori
Comments by Nicholas Van Hear, Maria Koinova, Lea Muller-Funk
Chair: Kalypso Nicolaidis
Diasporas have the potential to affect domestic developments in their homelands through the flow of political ideas and distinct political practices. Historically, the Greek diaspora had enjoyed a measure of influence in Greek foreign policy. The economic crisis has catalyzed the participation of the diaspora in a number of different ways on issues of domestic concern and / or issues which straddle the domestic & international domains, such as the negotiations with the country’s creditors. From Greece’s public discourse and policy debate to the increasing demands for the participation of the diaspora in the electoral process, the diaspora has become a meaningful political actor. The second session will discuss the implications of this process and learn from other experiences.

- What types of sociopolitical remittances may be expected to flow from the Diaspora to the homeland and what types of networks may be expected to emerge in a period when levels of trust towards established political institutions in Greece are extremely low?
- How can these new sociopolitical transnational spaces be creatively mobilized in an attempt to renew the country’s institutional foundations? What can be the policy responses, considering similar developments in the interaction between diaspora communities and homeland polities elsewhere in the world?

SESSION III: Philanthropy
Introductory presentation by Antonis Kamaras
Comments by Richard Clogg, Iryna Lapshyna, Dimitris Tziovias
Chair: Renee Hirschon
Diaspora philanthropy and volunteerism, has defined Greece’s diasporic prominence in the homeland since the inception of the Greek state. This tradition which progressively atrophied in the post WW II period is becoming particularly relevant in the present period of deep and prolonged economic crisis: Both the severe budgetary cuts and the crisis-driven reform process have drawn to Greece’s public and non-profit driven institutions, such as hospitals, universities and museums, diaspora volunteerism and donations. Yet it is commonly acknowledged that the diaspora’s contribution could be much more significant both in terms of funding and know-how.

- What are the determinants of diaspora philanthropy and interest in homeland investment?
- Which are the obstacles and the politics that drive and / or constrain the diaspora in its capacity as a volunteer and a donor in Greece and what other cases of cross-border philanthropy and volunteerism can tell us about the Greek case?
**Participants**

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position and Institution</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Othon Anastasakis</td>
<td>Director, South East European Studies at Oxford and Coordinator Greek Diaspora Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria Anastasopoulou</td>
<td>MSc Student, Migration Studies, Oxford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Clogg</td>
<td>Emeritus Fellow, St Antony’s College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robin Cohen</td>
<td>Emeritus Professor and former Director, International Migration Institute, University of Oxford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franck Duvell</td>
<td>Associate Professor and Senior Researcher, Centre on Migration, Policy and Society, University of Oxford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pavlos Eleftheriadis</td>
<td>Associate Professor of Law, University of Oxford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leslie Fesenmyer</td>
<td>ESRC Future Research Leaders Fellow, Centre on Migration, Policy and Society, University of Oxford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kira Gartzou</td>
<td>PhD Student, London School of Economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renee Hirschon</td>
<td>St Peter’s College and St Antony’s College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonis Kamaras</td>
<td>Country Representative, Greek Diaspora Project, South East European Studies at Oxford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foteini Kalantzi</td>
<td>PhD Student, University of Macedonia, Thessaloniki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eirini Karamouzi</td>
<td>Lecturer in Contemporary History, University of Sheffield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria Koinova</td>
<td>Reader in International Relations, Warwick University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iryna Lapshyna</td>
<td>Senior Researcher, Centre on Migration, Policy and Society, University of Oxford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michalis Moutselos</td>
<td>Post-Doctoral Fellow, Department of Socio-cultural Diversity, Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Founding member, Braingain</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lea Müller-Funk</td>
<td>OxPo Postdoctoral Fellow / Research Associate, CERI (Sciences Po)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yiorgos Mylonadis</td>
<td>Adjunct Professor of Strategy, London Business School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalypso Nicolaidis</td>
<td>Professor of International Relations &amp; Director of the Centre for International Studies, University of Oxford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elli Palaiologou</td>
<td>MPhil Student, DPIR, University of Oxford (Rapporteur)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elias Papaioannou</td>
<td>Professor of Economics, London Business School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manolis Pratsinakis</td>
<td>SEESOX/Onassis Fellow, Greek Diaspora Project, Department of Politics and International Relations; Marie Curie Fellow, University of Macedonia, Thessaloniki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamprini Rori</td>
<td>SEESOX/A.G.Leventis Fellow, St Antony’s College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimitris Tziovas</td>
<td>Professor, Department of Classics, Ancient History and Archaeology Centre for Byzantine, Ottoman &amp; Modern Greek Studies School of History and Cultures, University of Birmingham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick Van Hear</td>
<td>Deputy Director, Centre on Migration, Policy and Society, University of Oxford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vassiliki-Eleni Milonidis</td>
<td>MRes Student University College London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effie Voutira</td>
<td>Professor, Department of Balkan, Slavic &amp; Oriental Studies, University of Macedonia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elisabetta Zontini</td>
<td>Associate Professor, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Nottingham</td>
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The Greek Diaspora Project explores the relationship between Greece and the Greeks abroad in the context of economic crisis and beyond. It investigates how the Greek diaspora can affect Greece's political and economic transformation and explores ways for the Greek state, economy and society to interact with its diaspora and vice versa. This project is designed to reach a wide audience beyond academia.

**Goals**

The project seeks to:

- Become the preeminent forum for debate between the wider diaspora scholarship and scholarship dedicated to the Greek diaspora;
- Relate Greece and its diaspora to countries which can serve as benchmarks in the way they conduct diaspora-homeland interactions and pursue in-depth comparative studies;
- Be a port of call for anyone interested in contemporary aspects of the Greek diaspora, in terms of its library and archival resources, activities, institutional affiliations, policy relevant research;
- Analyse the new trends characterizing the current Greek diaspora in conjunction to the historical context, socio-economic change, varieties of cultural affinities and so on;
- Assess the developmental impact of the diaspora on the Greek economy and identify policies that can maximize its contribution;
- Provide valuable insights by serving as the nexus between research and policy;
- Inform Greek public debate and Greek policy makers on the Greek diaspora, its evolution and the policy implications of actual and potential interactions between the diaspora and Greece;
- Secure funding and research opportunities for a young generation of scholars dedicated to the study of the Greek diaspora.

[SEESOX Greek Diaspora Project](www.sant.ox.ac.uk/research-centres/south-east-european-studies-oxford/greek-diaspora-project)
Greek Diaspora Project: INTERACTIVE MAP

Greek Diaspora Map

Our project will explore the relationship between Greece and its diaspora in the current context of economic crisis and beyond. It will investigate how the Greek diaspora can affect Greece's political and economic transformation and explore ways for the Greek state, economy and society to interact with its diaspora.

For more information, please visit the project page at St. Anthony's College.

Go to the map
South East European Studies at Oxford (SEESOX) is part of the European Studies Centre (ESC) at St Antony’s College, Oxford. It focuses on the interdisciplinary study of the Balkans, Greece, Turkey and Cyprus. Drawing on the academic excellence of the University and an international network of associates, it conducts scholarly and policy relevant research on the multifaceted transformations of the region. It follows closely contemporary developments and analyses the historical and intellectual influences which have shaped perceptions and actions in the region. In Oxford’s best tradition, the SEESOX team is committed to understanding the present through the longue durée and reflecting on the future through high quality scholarship.

**Principal objectives:**

- ✓ To support high-quality teaching and research on South East Europe;
- ✓ To organise conferences, workshops and research seminars;
- ✓ To promote the multi-disciplinary study of the region within the University of Oxford (e.g. politics, international relations, anthropology, sociology, economics) working in collaboration with other Centres and Programmes within the University, including student societies;
- ✓ To spearhead intellectual exchanges and debate on these issues among networks of individuals and institutions beyond Oxford;
- ✓ To foster cooperation between the academic and the policy making communities.