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dynamics within Greek-Orthodox religioscapes*

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Greek-Orthodox Religioscapes**

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Abstract

The limited opportunities of the immensely contracted Greek economy since the eruption of the 2009 debt crisis gave rise to emigrational tendencies, particularly towards European countries. Europe was considered more approachable due to the freedom of movement, a fundamental EU principle. Notably, increased numbers of both unemployed Greeks – of varying levels of skills and training – as well as well-educated and employed Greeks wishing to pursue better social, working and economic conditions and rewards, relocated to several destinations, with Britain and Germany predominantly among them (Labrianidis & Pratsinakis, 2016). After emigrating, many sought to integrate within existing, relatively coherent diasporic ethnocultural and religious formations. Many utilised these social networks while seeking employment, being in part motivated by the social role of the parish as it has been embedded in the collective imaginary. In this framework, the question this paper asks is whether these migrants, being embedded in already existing religio-cultural networks, are being exposed to attitudes, value-systems and social practices anew. Namely, if and to what extent the predominantly collectivist cultural traits of the Greek emigrants/expats interface with the individualism-infused ones of the Greek-Orthodox diasporic communities. The question thereby arises as to whether constellations such as religioscapes, as forms of social organisation, inform and edify the newly-arrived on the particularities of the host culture within a context of an ‘old-new Diaspora’ discourse. From a sociocultural perspective it is neither uncommon nor new for the Greek Diaspora to engage in such exchanges and produce new and/or hybrid predominant cultural patterns within the framework of its religioscapes and communities, which are to some extent transferrable back to the homeland.

Keywords: Diaspora, *Gemeinschaft – Gesellschaft*, Greek Orthodoxy, Religioscapes, Brain Regain.

Socioeconomic crisis and the flight of human capital

Greece has suffered a prolonged economic crisis, on which literature as of late is rife with analyses on the causes. When the crisis erupted internationally, Greece’s weaknesses exposed it to immense pressure. The amassed fiscal and external deficits – namely, their steady increase in the period between the European Monetary Union (EMU) accession and 2007, and the notable debt increase between 2008 and 2009 – were brought to light and scrutinised, and subsequently Greece suffered negative growth (Christodoulakis, 2010).

Moreover, the significant increase in interest rates, combined with Greece's expanding external deficit, and the fact that most of Greece's public debt was in the hands of foreign banks, increased the pressure on the private sector's balance sheets. The borrowing rate was perceived as a sign of desperation in view of a forthcoming recession (Christodoulakis, 2010). Greece and other European Union (EU) member states were not as careless with their national deficits when they were still using national currencies, lest they endanger their currency stability. The EMU, however, eliminated this constraint and this – variably among EMU member states – resulted in the irresponsible practice of achieving growth by essentially amassing public and private debts. In other words, the elimination of the external constraint is considered one of the root causes of the crisis (Alphandéry, 2012). Moreover, the lax or non-enforcement of the Stability and Growth Pact¹ (Official Journal of the European Union, 2012) had consequences on the introduction of necessary reforms, encouraged the acquisition of large sovereign debts by Eurozone banks, led to risk underestimation by financial markets and credit-rating agencies, and in turn, led to an unrealistic degree of convergence of the Member States' bonds prices in the Eurozone (Delivorias, 2015).

One could expand on the Eurozone's structural deficiencies and debate the apportioning of accountability *ad nauseam*, yet decades-long domestic, endemic structural and political-cultural weaknesses have an immense causal bearing on Greece's predicament. Specifically, clientelism, corruption, populism, and the structural shortcomings of the state apparatus and bureaucracy all played critical roles in Greece's demise. The pre-existing politicisation of the bureaucracy continued in the post-junta era. The public sector grew in size but not in quality of services and efficiency, as it was strategically utilised as a ruling party instrument towards rewarding the clientele-electorate for its loyalty, and thereby, via the penetration of clientelism and nepotism, the lack of transparency and meritocracy was systemically embedded.

Moreover, further public institutions, services, agencies and structures were often established for the satisfaction of popular demand. This facilitated the appropriation of social actors and, by extension, the control of public life. In short, the state came to be identified with the ruling parties. Even the private sector developed ties as such. It follows that the combination of the above contributed to the legitimation and normalisation of populism (Lyrintzis, 2011). In addition, Greece has a poor record of reforms that, in retrospect, seem all the more imperative. In an array of sectors such as labour market, social security, public health, transport, etc., reforms have either failed or were not adequate, which attests to the problematic modernisation of the state apparatus (Lyrintzis, 2011).

To make things worse, apart from the low competitiveness, the Greek economy cannot find ways to absorb and utilise the wealth of domestic human capital to its benefit. A significant number of highly skilled and/or well-educated professionals, in light of their poor prospects in Greece, choose to migrate to Greece's detriment, as their departure constitutes a loss of human capital that could perhaps otherwise contribute to the recovery and

¹ The Stability and Growth Pact (SGP) is a set of rules and conditions agreed between EU Member States, intended to observe, coordinate and safeguard public finances and fiscal policies.

development of the Greek economy (Labrianidis, 2013). The phenomenon of human capital flight, i.e. emigration of skilled professionals in search of more promising and rewarding career opportunities, is the so-called brain drain (Kwok & Leland, 1982; Beine, Docquier & Schiff, 2008).

Greece has a history of labour emigration, skilled and unskilled. Contrary to the European 'core' states, Greece, like other peripheral countries, experiences a surplus of skilled labour, not necessarily because it is really excessive, but rather because the economy is not in a position to profit from its human capital. This of course affects its competitiveness potential and its prospects, thus constituting a self-perpetuating vicious circle of stagnation. Furthermore, the impact of the brain drain, as well as the skilled human capital, is underrated and underappreciated in Greece (Labrianidis & Vogiatzis, 2013a). To better appreciate the extent of the phenomenon, according to the Hellenic Statistical Authority there has been a notable rise in the migratory tendencies of both the skilled and unskilled workforce, particularly since 2011 when the social and political consequences of the crisis became acute. It is worth noting the emergence of a clear emigrational increase pattern from 2012 onwards, which is quite detrimental demographically to a country with low birth rates and a total population of 10,816,286, according to the census of 2011 (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2018). It is debatable, however, whether the figures that have been published over time correspond to the actual number of emigrants, considering that increased mobility due to freedom of movement gives rise to oftentimes unrecorded cases of de- and reterritorialisation, and not to mention, repatriation.

The question of *Metakenosis* anew (Peer Brain Regain)

Obviously, the current developmental approaches and economic circumstances could not curb the brain drain. The containment of the latter, together with repatriation of some of the human capital, can only be a long-term goal, provided that Greece undergoes a transformation and eradicates the root causes of the brain drain. Alternatively, Greece could capitalise on its lost human capital by approaching it as a Diaspora instead; that is, as if the migrants were to remain abroad indefinitely (Labrianidis, 2013; Labrianidis & Pratsinakis, 2017). Indeed, whether the end-goal is to be able to incentivise a 'brain regain', which I define as *the repatriation of human capital and/or the transnational peer transfusion of its accumulated experience, insights, know-how, culture and ethos from more successful socioeconomic paradigms to the homeland*, or to review and modernise Greece's structures, the latest wave of emigration could serve as a channel towards transferring better practices and attitudes from the structures and institutions of the destination countries. Thereby, a shift in the overarching sociocultural mentality and attitude to production, consumption, work ethic, relationship and interaction with the state and its structures and institutions may transpire. Ultimately, this would be an infusion of the domestic value system from destination countries with elements taken from, in retrospect, these more successful socioeconomic

cultural paradigms, devoid of the euphemistically called ‘Greek reality’ (Gr.: *Ελληνική πραγματικότητα*), i.e. of the endemic flaws, built-in the Greek self-image, which are often perceived as part of the Greek particularity and *Leitkultur*². In short, the New Greek Diaspora that settled in other EU Member States may have a valuable contribution to make with regard to Greece’s modernisation and Europeanisation without actually being repatriated. Greece’s not so remote past is indicative of patterns and tendencies that may be identifiable in the contemporary emigrational currents. Namely, the first-generation diasporic communities tended to group together around their church, forming religioscapes. Consequently, subsequent generations tend to seek those religioscapes as stepping stones and shortcuts into the host country and society. Therefore, the hypothesis that ought to be tested once the current emigrants are established abroad and become part of the social fabric there, is (a) whether the existing Greek-Orthodox religioscapes do actually support and edify the newcomers in the particulars of the overarching host culture, (b) as well as the predisposition of the newcomers to, in turn, transmit their hybridisation to their homeland – with which they typically maintain living ties – and thus help it converge with the Western paradigm, and (c) the receptiveness of the kinship structures back in Greece to such transfusion attempts, i.e. the success potential of an indirect or peer brain regain.

Individualism, collectivism and Europeanisation

The East-West cultural divergence is deep seated and organically endemic. It can be traced back to the very core of social organisation principles that draw respectively from collectivism and individualism. Exemplary works of the classical relevant literature still apply, which attests to the diachronic character of the issue. For instance, Tönnies defines community (Ger.: *Gemeinschaft*) as a form of social organisation permeated by the organic development of relationships and associations, whereas society (Ger.: *Gesellschaft*) is an ideational, rational one (Tönnies, 1922). The former is emotive, personal and traditionally structured, while the latter is rather impersonal and efficiency-driven. In the case of Greece, distinct patterns of social organisation show that the transition from community to society has been partial and problematic, and that constellations of the *Gemeinschaft* typology are still commonplace.

In part this can be explained by the fact that Greece did not experience the same historical turning points as the West, such as the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Enlightenment – the latter was adapted to the Greek framework and was never socially fathomed in its original form. But as regards the communal social organisation in particular, Greece missed the wave of intense urbanisation of the second half of the 19th century. Notably, even in the European West – with the term ‘West’ being used as shorthand to denote

² Meant here as ‘dominant’ or ‘core’ culture, with overarching, distinct values and common principles. See Bassam Tibi’s *Europa ohne Identität? Die Krise der multikulturellen Gesellschaft*, 1998, who uses the term in order to define and determine what he considers the dominant German, but ultimately European common culture.

the corresponding cultural paradigm, and not as an accurate geographical demarcation – the social differentiation between the late 19th century city and its early modern predecessor was immense, as the previous social stratification model was made obsolete. Urbanisation gave rise to commercialisation and a new typology of professions and entrepreneurship, e.g. the developer, the realtor, and to new living conditions with regard to owning and renting property (Osterhammel, 2011). Within the framework of the discourses of the time concerning urbanity, the view of the city as ‘modern’ and as the setting where modernity was realised, political and cultural progress and creativity were identified with urbanity (Osterhammel, 2011). Moreover, in the industrialisation of the 19th century, one detects emergent patterns of Western pan-European intertwining and integration of the production processes and of the markets thereof, with the involvement of respective governments no less, while the Western cultural homogeneity simplified the technical and scientific exchanges. Moreover, the second industrial revolution of the late 19th century enabled the full mechanisation of production, and, in turn, triggered a paradigm shift in the means of production from the preindustrial model; hence, the corresponding transition in the professional social typology, e.g. from property owner-entrepreneur to manager (Osterhammel, 2011). Essentially it was the *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* at work (Weber, 1950).

Instead of attributing the latter to historical materialism or rationalism, Max Weber considers it an outcome of a religious historical process that was ushered in by the Reformation. In that sense, even in overwhelmingly Roman Catholic countries one observes a predominantly backward, traditional work ethic and a capitalistic underdevelopment (Weber, 1950). It is a pre-capitalist, natural impulse to reproduce and perpetuate a given way of life and to resist innovation, instead of seeking to increase productivity and profitability via the intensification and modernisation of corresponding processes, attributed by and large to the fixation on tradition (Weber, 1950). The spirit of capitalism thrives, therefore, in the individualist environment of the *Gesellschaft*, not in a collectivist *Gemeinschaft*, for it is the exercise of the individual’s calling that is prioritised as the highest form of this-worldly activity (Weber, 1950). While the individualist culture within society provides an environment in which personal norms, goals and aspirations are given priority, in collectivist community cultures, group norms and aspirations come first. Thereby duties and pre-specified roles are more or less a given. One is not one’s own, but a group member primarily, and it follows that the individual yields to the community, the will of the *Volk*, (Payne, 2011). As Hirschon puts it,

Greek society is firmly grounded in kinship and family relationships. Every Greek is primarily a member of a family, and consequently the Greek individual is always embedded in networks of given, ascribed relationships, and is essentially a relational being (Hirschon, 2010, p.305).

Hence, Greek culture favours the notion of the person (*prosōpo*, Gr.: *πρόσωπο*) over that of the individual (Ibid.). In turn, this affects the state, its structures, institutions and functions. Greece has not fully transitioned from the Weberian ‘patrimonial’ state to the modern one. The latter is impersonal, whereas the former favours personal relationships – friends, family, etc. – over meritocracy, which is evident even in the nepotistic recruitment of staff to the state administration (Fukuyama, 2015). This phenomenon is, by and large, determined by the political order that the predominant form of social organisation imposes, rather than by any given government (Fukuyama, 2015). Greece’s main pillar of social organisation is that of kinship. In fact, kinship co-determined its urbanisation as the collectivist qualities of the *Gemeinschaft*, with its pre-existing communal familiarity networks, were transferred to the city, forming thus the ‘urban village’, particularly in the absence of any bourgeois or proletariat class in the urban setting (Papakostas, 2001; Tsoucalas, 1978). The ‘familial-kinship’ typology of group adherence complicates the interaction with state institutions as it renders it superficial, non-participatory and the citizen unaccountable; ultimately the state is not trusted, nor the exercise of its authority (Legg & Roberts, 1997).

The balancing act of ‘a society possessing a Western cultural style but an anti-Western political orientation’ attests to an identity crisis which is evident nowadays as well (Legg & Roberts, 1997: 24). This emanates from the very founding of the Greek state and the reconciliation between the *Rōmiosynē* (Gr.: *Ρωμιούσυνη*) – which stemmed from the adherence to the Eastern Roman Empire, the Greek Orthodox *Rum Millet* etc. – and the Neo-Hellenic construct that had references to the classical antiquity (Weithmann, 1994). In any case, the state-building of the time was modelled after the Western paradigm, but it was imposed on an ‘oriental society’ (Weithmann, 1994: 184), and in Weithmann’s view it would not be amiss to hold that Greece’s 19th century Europeanisation was the first experiment of that kind. However difficult the task, between 1833 and 1835, ministries, administrative bodies, courts, communal law, the administrative division of the country to *nomoi* (Gr.: *νομοί*) i.e. provinces etc., comprised the foundations of a Greek state. As for urbanity, the only city suitable for the state’s capital was Nauplion. Needless to say, the almost deserted Ottoman-style Bazaar towns such as Tripolitsa, Thebes and Zeitouni (nowadays Lamia) were not even an option worthy of consideration (Weithmann, 1994).

Generally, Greece’s Europeanisation and adaptation to the prerequisites of its EU membership have not been easy. In fact, anti-Western political tendencies and alignment with questionable – in the view of the European Economic Communities (EEC) and subsequently EU membership – powers attest to a pattern. Examples, which include Libya, the Soviet Union, or a constant pro-Arab stance in the Middle East are rife – not to mention that Greece, namely the government of Konstantinos Mitsotakis (1990–1993), recognised the state of Israel as late as 1990 (Axt, 1997b). If anything, Greece’s European orientation was utilitarian, if not, more often than not, a necessary evil. The disillusionment with NATO over the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974 led to the EEC membership as an alternative security option, particularly in view of the Turkish threat, within the framework of a ‘calculated

Europeanism' and a broader 'costs and benefits' approach, coupled with unrealistic aspirations as to what the EU could do for Greece (Axt, 1997a).

In retrospect, cross-party domestic political elites who have served in high-ranking posts admit now that Greece needs to catch up with the European core states and meet the EU standards. In other words, within the Europeanisation framework, Greece needs to appropriate and embed the so called 'good practices' that other states developed. What is more, Greece will need to accomplish that within a compressed timeframe (Trantas, 2018). Indications of the aforementioned identity crisis surface as expressions of Eastern inclination and anti-Westernism, which has contributed to the selective and partial application of necessary reforms (Ibid.). After all, Europeanisation boils down to the convergence of

processes of a) construction, b) diffusion and c) institutionalisation of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, 'ways of doing things' and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the EU policy process and then incorporated in the logic of domestic (national and sub-national) discourse, political structures and public policies (Radaelli, 2004, p.3).

Religioscapes, glocal clusters of reterritorialisation, mutation and transfusion

As stated earlier, the newly emigrated Greeks to EU states where the freedom of movement, establishment and employment applies, may serve as a conveyor of good practices and Europeanisation, regardless of how many of them choose to repatriate. In fact, it seems more likely that the majority shall not. Empirical evidence so far suggests that whilst abroad, many seek to be embedded in a social support system and they find it in the existing diasporic formations which are pervaded by the same basic, core elements that constitute a sense of *being* and therefore of *belonging* to a greater whole (Trantas, 2018). A most popular refuge, as such, would be the Greek Orthodox Church and its corresponding migrant communities, the Greek Orthodox religioscapes, which are defined as 'subjective religious maps – and attendant theologies – of immigrant, or diasporic, or transnational communities who are also in global flow and flux' (McAlister, 2005: 251).

These religioscapes are coterminous with the already established migrant communities because, for the most part, they emerged out of the need for a constant, stable point of reference; their presence in the host countries was not safeguarded as it is today by the EU *acquis*, but was rather conditionally governed by different legal regimes. Such examples can be identified primarily in Germany and the United Kingdom, as in both cases there exist established networks of Greek-Orthodox religioscapes, not to mention that the former attracted a significant number of Greek emigrants since the outbreak of the economic crisis (OECD, 2016). Meanwhile, the latter remains a very popular destination due to its *lingua franca*, inter alia. In fact, Britain and Germany are by far the most favoured destinations,

receiving approximately 50% of the total migration outflow (Labrianidis & Pratsinakis, 2016). In these two countries, the post 2009 wave of new Greek emigration found the religioscapes that were formed during the 1950s and 1960s, either as *Gastarbeiter* (guest-workers) or post-colonial Commonwealth citizens (Thränhardt, 1984; Hopf, 1987; Anthias, 1992, Papapavlou & Pavlou, 2001). This is not surprising given that Greeks tend to establish their churches together with their communities. The Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Germany and Exarchate of Central Europe, for example, was founded on February 5, 1963, long before the Greek *Gastarbeiter* secured their right to remain in the country (Trantas & Tseligka, 2016). Likewise, the Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain, founded in 1922, clearly preceded the establishment of the Greek-Cypriot Commonwealth migrant communities (Archbishop Gregorios, 2012). This is a diachronic phenomenon which constitutes a pattern: e.g., the establishment of a Greek-Orthodox church in 1772 in Calcutta, two decades after the first Greek presence was documented there, would be indicative of this (Harris, 2009). This typology is not alien to the Greek government's General Secretariat for Greeks Abroad (GSGA), which regards the Greek Orthodox Church to be of considerable appeal to newly arrived emigrants (Cavounidis, 2015). More to the point, even though church attendance in Greece is as low as 17%, 90% of Greeks identify as Orthodox, while 76% associate religion with their national identity (Pew Research Centre, 2017). It would not be amiss then to maintain that the migrant relocates together with one's self-perception.

However, the transformative element in cultural self-perception is a given when identity fermentations transpire within religioscapes. It appears that such de- and reterritorialised religiocultural constellations, particularly when well established, are infused with elements of the host country and undergo a form of cultural mutation or hybridisation, as they crystallise in glocal clusters within the context of globality (Papastergiadis, 2000; Beyer, 2013; Roudometof, 2005). There, within the global *Gesellschaft* that emerged out of the increased mobility, particularly in Europe, hybrid forms of identity are reconstructed within a reterritorialised *Gemeinschaft* (Hobsbawm, 2007). Previous constants like the nation-state are no longer sufficient to interpret the phenomenon and its consequences: the territorially demarcated state that was tautologically identified with the society therein, being thus the container of the latter, is now porous and internationalised, thereby it also hosts – and exports in the case of Greece – glocal constellations (Beck, 1998).

Therein, a new, constantly-under-construction collective and individual memory is being forged into the narrative of a living community (Nora, 1989). On the one hand, communicative memory is influenced by day-to-day interactions which are socially mediated and group-related, essentially subject to the broader host society's particularity, while on the other hand cultural memory, unaffected by the temporal changes, remains anchored in its major symbolic constellations (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995). The amalgamation of these two memory aspects is an indication of cultural hybridisation. This does not imply that modernisation entails sweeping cultural change per se; rather, that ultimately full assimilation would be neither necessary nor beneficial in my view. Cultural change ensues even when core traditional values are preserved as a constituent element of identity (Inglehart & Baker, 2000).

Diasporic attitudes and practices are subject to change and adaptation, and through the interplay between new and old Diasporas this phenomenon is intensified. This is attributable to (a) the globalised economy and the opportunities that it offers; (b) new forms of migration, often transitory, intermittent or semi-permanent; (c) the rise of cosmopolitanism, particularly in metropolitan settings; (d) the post-secular character of the international state of affairs, which allows for corresponding means of reterritorialisation and interaction (Cohen, 2008; Habermas, 2006). In being constantly subject to change, new Diasporas that are being embedded in existing diasporic religioscapes may well be enabled by the cosmopolitan stimulus at a glocal level to transcend cultural boundaries (Roudometof, 2005).

This is crucial, given that it is highly unlikely that the human capital shall be repatriated in light of the lack of opportunities in Greece (Labrianidis & Vogiatzis, 2013b). Instead, it is the potential transfusion of the earlier mentioned qualities that Greece should expect to benefit from in the long run, in a form of what I call a 'brain regain'. Sustained contact with the homeland, following establishment and integration abroad, renders this transfusion possible. Diasporic communication networks may vary in their characteristics, but their ties with the national centre are considered resilient and multifaceted, given that they develop multiple points of contact (Exertzoglou, 2008). Greece's emigrational flow – as well as the crisis' consequences that cause it – is still ongoing. Yet, one may draw parallels between the present and past examples as such, in order to better understand and appreciate what this population movement and religioscapes formation may yield.

The Greek Enlightenment is such a case: where a series of geographical points of reference extended outside the classical heartland of Greece, well into central Europe, as the incoming Enlightenment ideas emanated from the West. The emergent geographical patterns of the time coincided with the established Greek communities and their commercial interests, where the vibrant trading centres could provide funds to finance schools, promote modern philosophy and infuse the monopoly of Eastern Orthodox ideas with Western, modern ones. As a result, the traditional learning triptych of Constantinople – Athos – Patmos lost its place to the following geographical pattern of triangles: '(i) Chios – Smyrna – Kydonies; (ii) Ioannina – Kozani – Kastoria; (iii) Bucharest – Jassy – Budapest (including the Balkan Diaspora in Transylvania); (iv) Venice – Trieste – Vienna' (Kitromilides, 1989: 667–76).

The Phanariots, elites of the time – diplomats, hegemon, writers etc. – were the vanguard of the Greek Enlightenment (1774–1821), as they drew from the Western model of the latter in the Danubian principalities. Moreover, inspired by Montesquieu, bright individuals such as Mandakasis, Moisioudax and Voulgaris emerged as representative thinkers of the first period of the Greek Enlightenment, followed by Katartzis, Filippidis, Konstantas in the second, and then in the third period, scholars and intellectuals drew from the French movement of the *Ideologues* who emphasised the principles of freedom and equality. Adamantios Korais' note 'on the current condition of the Greeks' (Gr.: *Για την παρούσα Κατάσταση των Ελλήνων*), first published in French in 1803 and then repeatedly in Greek, constitutes the definitive work of the Greek Enlightenment (Dimaras, 1989: 9–11). Korais

insisted – albeit to no avail – in the transfusion, *Metakenosis* (Gr.: *Μετακένωσις*), of the Western system of ideas and values to Greece following centuries of cultural distortion (Papaderos, 1970). It is worth noting that Korais was an active diasporic businessman in Amsterdam, not just a theoretician (Harris, 2009). In short, from within the Greek Diaspora emerged the Greek national movement. It advocated national regeneration through education and the subsequent formation of nationhood as a preparatory step towards statehood. This was a mindset, obviously modelled after the Western paradigm to which the Greek-Orthodox religioscapes of the time were exposed, intended to reintegrate the Greeks to the ‘European family of nations’ (Koliopoulos & Veremis, 2010: 16).

Consider for example the hybridisation interplay within a religioscape framework that was noted in the case of the Greek-Orthodox community in 18th and 19th century Vienna. This small Greek-Orthodox enclave managed to integrate, establish its presence spatially, economically and culturally, and climbed the social ladder to become part of the Viennese bourgeoisie. Their churches of St George and the Holy Trinity were a religioscape statement in the public sphere; they had their own school, charity fund, etc. They have been linked with Rigas Ferraios, the Greek Enlightenment and the dissemination of corresponding ideas, established their renowned Greek publishing and press that made the latter possible, and it was there that an array of national benefactors such as Simon Sinas, Constantine Belios, and Nikolaos Doumbas stemmed from (Seirinidou, 2008). Rigas, in addition, influenced by the French revolutionary ideas, promoted the involvement of the European Major Powers in the national cause (Wittig, 1987).

A contemporary example of how the transformative element infuses self-perception can be found in the glocal Greek-Orthodox religioscapes of Germany. The majority of the *Gastarbeiter* who sought to escape from Greece’s unemployment and poverty in the 1960s came from rural areas. To them, the urban setting, as well as its day-to-day way of life’s particularities and exigencies, was alien for the most part – made worse by the language gap. Yet, not only did they integrate, but they fully endorsed and appropriated their locality, their adopted city. What is more, their new home was ‘canonised’ and legitimated in their collective narratives. In fact, there are iconographic examples and frescoes where their adopted German cities are featured and their parish saint is presented as a local patron saint, which constitutes a *par excellence* symbolic portrayal of the full urban reterritorialisation and spatial endorsement of a Greek-Orthodox emigrant religioscape (Trantas & Tseligka, 2016).

In addition, it ought to be stressed that other forms of migratory social organisation are not as far reaching and all-encompassing. For instance, local and regional points of reference with regard to the place of origin in the homeland inevitably incite exclusivist connotations: Cretan, Macedonian, Peloponnesian, Epirot, etc., clubs and societies fall into this category. Offshoots and offices of Greek political parties abroad have been the root of division as they invested in the polarisation of the Diaspora in order to increase their voting turnout. Yet, this phenomenon is now a thing of the past. Diachronically, it is the church, the point of reference of a religioscape, as well as the parish at a more localised level in terms of reterritorialisation, with its multifold functions and activities that can encompass, nurture,

and edify the collective sense of being. Therein, an array of this and other-worldly needs are covered: educational, recreational and social. It becomes the meeting point and the *agora*, the natural diasporic epicentre of socialisation, *mutatis mutandis* for those who actually identify themselves as Diaspora (Trantas & Tseligka, 2016).

A frequent exchange and discourse transpires within the religioscapes framework between the old and new Diaspora. Through this discourse, and via the stimulus of mutation, the *problématique* and transfusion of ideas and values is already set in motion. One could of course consider social media and online platforms as means of interconnection and belonging, but they are no substitute for fixed glocal points of reference, nor do they facilitate physical, immediate forms of socialisation. They host community forums but in no way do they offer a reterritorialisation alternative, given that they are *atopic* by nature – their spatial anchoring is merely nominal. In addition, they cannot take the place of ritual, tradition and other constitutive identity elements of the collective imaginary. In that sense, the role of social media is complementary – they can help transmit the migratory experience – while the role of religioscapes is further reaching, touching on aspects of *belonging* that are linked with meaning and purpose and address essential questions of being in a collectivity, in the framework of religiocultural self-perception (Castoriadis 1987; 1996).

Although social media facilitate migration (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014), their passive, non-participatory nature may well hinder integration, as it does not encourage active involvement in the host society (Komito, 2011). Hence, hybridisation is weakened. What social media can do, though, is facilitate the knowledge, insights and values transfusion between the New Diaspora and the homeland. Given that the ties of the new Diaspora with the homeland are active and maintained through contemporary means of communication and mobility, the frequent dissemination of ideas and transfusion of good practices, is rendered possible – regardless of how time consuming and slow this learning process may be. Whether this shall be fruitful simply remains to be seen. Yet, it would not be amiss to consider the possibility of a peer ‘brain regain’ variant, i.e., one that does not require repatriation. There may be valuable edifying elements in store by considering this.

Conclusion

The Greek sovereign debt crisis has triggered an emigrational wave that has and will continue to impact the economy. The loss of human capital is certainly detrimental, not only because of the brain drain – since the brains were going to waste in a domestic hostile socioeconomic environment anyway, which rendered them obsolete – but also because an array of skills, youthful population and potentially taxable workforce is lost. However, the brain drain in itself is not the main problem but merely a symptom of it. Greece is lagging behind in many aspects of its socioeconomic development and political culture. This *problématique* is not new and it has occupied scholars, politicians and commentators for quite some time. Europeanisation has not been accomplished for a number of reasons, but by and large the

consensus is that this long-lasting failure is more complex than simply poor governance, and that it ought to be attributed to endemic root causes. In that sense, the detrimental effect of the flight of human capital is not as far-reaching as it is perceived to be, given that the domestic structural weaknesses and chronic flaws would render its added value obsolete and ultimately its expatriation almost inconsequential.

In fact, there might be future gains to be made from what now appears to be detrimental, in terms of the brain drain. But the Greek state and society should not expect its emigrant brains to yield the much needed benefits immediately - this will take time, as most sociocultural fermentations do. There is a proven tendency for Greek emigrants to seek an existing network of established Greek communities, which more often than not are to be found in religious formations. The first generations of migrants have already collectively undergone the processes that determined their integration in the host country and enabled their hybridisation. It appears that they did not shed their pre-existing identity altogether after immigrating, but infused it with traits of their host country that rendered them integration-able in the first place. Such patterns are characterised by an infusion of values and attitudes that boil down to a reconciliation and amalgamation of individualism and collectivism, which by extension challenge the entrenched views on work, wealth generation and distribution, the relationship between state, society and the individual, etc. This phenomenon is still ongoing and is indicative of the challenges and opportunities of globality, and, in turn, of the glocal responses to them, as well as of the distinct community and society (*Gemeinschaft – Gesellschaft*) dynamic that permeates the diasporic Greek-Orthodox religious landscapes. It would not be amiss to investigate whether the diasporic religious landscapes may function as hosts of cultural mutation and hybridisation, and thereby, in turn, facilitate the transfusion of corresponding values and attitudes back to Greece, constituting thus an indirect brain regain.

In that respect it is worth investigating whether, and to what extent, the adaptation of previous generations of expats may be proven useful to the new emigrants; such that it could constitute a stepping stone to integration in the context of an 'old-new Diaspora' discourse. The new Diaspora, in turn, should not be expected to sever ties with the homeland, being the organic link between the homeland and the diasporic setting. It would be fruitful to research the possibility of the new Diaspora functioning as conveyor of value-systems, know-how, insights, and ultimately of convergence with more successful paradigms. In that sense, the most valuable aspect of human capital – the brains and psyches – that is actually transferrable despite the distance, may be in a constant engagement with the homeland, while being in fact enriched via the migratory experience. As such, a post-modern version of the *Metakenosis* concept, a peer brain regain within an EU context and in the form of remote influence rather than repatriation, deserves our attention.

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The Greek Diaspora Project at SEESOX

Mission statement

The Greek Diaspora Project (GDP) was set up at SEESOX with the overall aim to serve as a nexus between academic research and policy, and to help identify ideas to maximise the developmental impact of the Greek diaspora on contemporary Greek politics, economy and society. The project studies the relationship between Greece and its diaspora within the context of the current economic crisis and beyond.

Project objectives

- Become the preeminent forum for debate between the wider diaspora scholarship and scholarship dedicated to the Greek diaspora;
- Relate Greece and its diaspora to other similar countries and conduct 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;
- Assess the developmental impact of the diaspora on the Greek economy and identify policies that can maximize its contribution;
- 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.

About SEESOX

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 academic and policy relevant research on the current multifaceted transformations of the region. It follows closely regional phenomena 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.



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