

## Chapter 13

# Helping the Homeland? Diasporic Greeks in Australia and the Potential for Homeland-Oriented Development at a Time of Economic Crisis

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### **Diasporas and Homeland-oriented Development: The Role of Diasporic Obligation and Economic Connections**

Governments are increasingly using their diasporas in strategic ways, which have been widely critiqued (Larner, 2007; Sheffer, 2010; Dufoix, 2011; Ho, 2012; Brinkerhoff, 2012; Gamlen, 2013; Pellerin and Mullings, 2013). Rather than assume that diasporic return is the only way for diasporas to help, governments are seeking to use their diasporas for economic gain, often through remittances, and through brain exchange and/or circulation. However, despite the potentially useful role that those in diaspora can play, questions remain about the extent and willingness of particularly skilled and highly skilled members of diasporic groups to get involved in home-land orientated affairs for nationalistic reasons, 'brain circulation' (Meyer and Brown, 1999) and the value and effectiveness of diasporic socio-economic and political involvement in the homeland and networks between those in diaspora and the homeland (Vertovec, 2002, 2007). Whilst there are examples of positive effects on, for example, politics (Bernal, 2006), higher education (Jöns, Mavroudi and Heffernan, forthcoming) and remittances (de Haas, 2005; Saxenian, 2006), some remain sceptical about the ability of those in diaspora to reverse 'brain drain' and engage in 'brain circulation' (Pellegrino, 2001; Teferra, 2004; 2005; Raghuram, 2009) which is increasingly being used as an alternative to the more static concepts of 'brain drain' and 'brain gain' (Gaillard and Gaillard, 1997).

Faist (2008) discusses the potential difficulties that transnational businesspeople, political diasporas and 'epistemic' communities may face when becoming involved in homeland development. He stresses that such communities have often been treated as a united 'collective' and that there is a need to analyse and deconstruct the complex differences within diasporic, transnational communities and social spaces as well as the role of the state. It is often those who are more highly skilled, educated, older and better established (e.g. Saxenian, 2002) and who have more

clearly defined legal statuses and are in better financial positions (Portes, 2009) who are more likely to be involved in cyclical migration, brain circulation and transnational and diasporic communities and networks (e.g., Saxenian, 2002). Cultural and biographical, family factors can also encourage brain circulation and brain exchange. For example, there is evidence to suggest that a 'community of professional expatriates can make a significant contribution to the scientific and technological development of their home country' because of a nationalistic wish to support the homeland (Portes, 2009: 16). However, it is also important to examine more closely such assumptions about long-distance nationalism, as diasporic negotiations of home and belonging become ever more complex and multiple (Vertovec, 2007). It is for this reason Ancien, Boyle and Kitchin (2009) propose the notion of 'affinity diasporas' and Jöns, Mavroudi and Heffernan (forthcoming) outline the notion of 'elective' diasporas; both stress the need for governments to be more inclusive of those who might constitute 'their' diaspora. Such notions also stress the need to re-conceptualise diaspora as 'process' (Mavroudi, 2007a), whereby diasporic lives, identities and actions are seen as dynamic, in-between, and hybrid, but also as situated, grounded; as a result, we are better able to analyse power relations, inclusions, exclusions and the myriad ways in which those in diaspora might construct particular types of identities, and perceive their changing connectedness to their homelands. In short, there is a need to consider diasporas as both bounded, and unbounded (Brubaker, 2005) as they sit within and beyond state borders. Research on diasporas and development needs to take into account these juxtapositions and examine the many different (dis)connections between 'here' and 'there' more closely and in inter-related ways.

It is useful to dissect and deconstruct the notion of diasporic obligation towards the homeland when analysing the potential to become involved in development activities aimed at the homeland. Werbner (2002) has put forward the notion of 'moral co-responsibility' to help explain British Pakistani diasporic networks and actions across time and space. Despite the heterogeneity of diaspora, Werbner (2002) outlines the different ways that this diasporic group reach out beyond their immediate localised communities through moral, embodied performances of obligation and sharing. Parekh (1996: 264, cited in Mohan, 2008: 871) outlines how diasporic obligation is linked 'social actions that the moral agent ought to undertake and his failure to do which reflects badly on him and renders him liable to social disapproval'. Whilst such diasporic obligations may be linked to ethno-national homeland-oriented identities, and a political need to help one's homeland, this is not necessarily the case. The need to get involved 'there' and to contribute towards development may have more to do with diasporic everyday life and socio-cultural interactions than politics or an overt need to get involved in homeland development. Page and Mercer (2012) warn against narrow definitions of homeland-oriented development and stress that migrants' everyday lives, identities and activities need to be taken into account when analysing their propensity to help in homeland development. This also means that it is important to consider what those in diaspora feel about homeland-oriented obligation and

how they construct their material linkages to 'there'. In particular, there is a need to analyse why those in diaspora may or may not contribute to their homeland in times of economic need and how this is linked to diasporic connections to the homeland. This chapter will add to such debates on the role that diasporas can play in homeland development, from the perspective of those in diaspora by examining diasporic Greeks in Australia and the extent to which they feel able to help, and are obligated towards, Greece during a time of economic crisis.

### **The Greek Diasporic Context in Australia: Linking Success in Diaspora to Development in Greece?**

Given the financial difficulties that Greece has faced from 2008 onwards, it is a particularly relevant time to explore the role of the Greek diaspora in helping its homeland. In 2010, internet forums revealed that diasporic Greeks, especially in the United States, were sceptical (Terrazas, 2010) about the ability of diasporic Greeks to do so, but there has been no recent research on why and how Greeks in diaspora might get involved in homeland business ventures and the economic links they have with their homeland and the research this chapter is based on aimed to address this. There has been research on remittances (Glytsos, 1997), which has stressed that Greeks who are more permanent are more likely to send money as a 'gift'. In addition, research on Greeks in Australia has focused more on their lives, influence and identities in Australia rather than the material connections they have with their homeland (Tamis and Tsolakis, 1999; Tamis, 2005; Tsolidis and Pollard, 2010). According to Tamis (2005), the main Greek migration period to Australia was after World War II, although they had started going there from the 1900s onwards in smaller numbers, rising to over 15,000 by 1940 but it was after 1952 (until 1974) that over 250,000 Greeks and Greek Cypriots made their way to Australia. At this time most were male, uneducated and unskilled. It was only from the 1960s onwards that more female Greeks arrived and this so-called 'pioneer' generation aimed to permanently settle in Australia whilst still remaining connected to Greece, and aimed to uphold 'Greekness' in diaspora. This had repercussions for their children, the second generation, who found themselves the target of prejudice (like their parents) had to negotiate the daily reality of 'here' and 'there', living in Australia and dealing with their parents continued emotional connection to Greece and desire to raise them as Greek (Tamis, 2005). More subsequent migration from Greece has been lower, and those who have left have been more educated and skilled as Australia has increasingly focused on targeting skilled and economically 'needed' migrants (Hawthorne, 2005).

Beyond Australia, there has been work on Greeks in America but again this has tended to concentrate on integration, identity and life in the United States (Anagnostou, 2003) and Angouri (2012) has examined the complexities of diasporic 'Greekness' in New Zealand. Panagakos's (2004) work has focused on the transnational family connections between diasporic Greek Canadians and

the homeland and Christou's extensive, varied work on the Greek diaspora has explored Greek-Americans who return to Greece and the difficulties they face (2006a, 2006b) as well as the realities of living and feeling 'in-between' for Greek-Danes (2011).

However, much less is known about the economic links diasporic Greeks have with the homeland and what socio-economic and cultural factors influence the propensity to return, set up businesses in the homeland, become involved in 'brain circulation', or support family businesses. A report by Chrisodoulidis (2010) stressed the role that diasporic Greeks play in the economy of Australia but had little to say about the role that diasporic Greeks can play in homeland economies and development. Hugo and Bakalis (2009: 216) support this by pointing out that 'the strong people-to-people ties between Australia and Greece appear not to have enhanced the economic relationship'. They stress there is a need for more research on the links between Greek Australians and their home country. In addition to this, there is a need for more research on the positive role that the Greek diaspora can play in helping homeland development, particularly at a time of economic and political crisis (Hugo and Bakalis 2014); indeed Hugo and Bakalis (2014) stress that the Greek diaspora does have strong potential to help Greece economically through e.g., business and educational linkages.

On the other hand, the Karpathian Greeks in Canberra are an interesting example of a group of diasporic Greeks who feel they have contributed generously to their native island of Karpathos (Tamis and Tsolakis, 1999). Tamis (2005) also provides evidence of formal Greek-Australian linkages particularly in relation to education but also in terms of business and investment networks and the creation of organisations like the SAE (World Council of Greeks Abroad) and the HACCI (Hellenic Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, set up in the 1990s), which he claims have been beneficial in not only helping to organise Greeks in diaspora, but also in terms of promoting positive relations with the homeland. However, Hugo and Bakalis (2014) highlight that the SAE's role in encouraging and coordinating diasporic entrepreneurial activities has been hampered by its exclusion of second and third generation diaspora Greeks.

Of relevance here is the Greek state's attitude towards its diaspora. Initially, when Greece first became a country of emigration, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the diaspora was viewed negatively and it was not until the early 1950s that sustained efforts to 'reach' out to its diaspora started with formal recognition of the important economic role that remittances were playing in the Greek economy, accompanied with attempts to promote diaspora tourism. However, it seems that the Greek state has been slow to formalise economic agreements and linkages with its diaspora and the countries in which they reside; in addition, they have not made it easy for those in diaspora to invest in the homeland (Vogli, 2011).

The research this chapter is based on was conducted in the early months of 2012 with members of the Greek diaspora in Canberra and Melbourne.<sup>1</sup> Although Melbourne has very large numbers of diasporic Greeks residing there, giving it the reputation of being the third largest Greek city in the world, diasporic Greeks have been particularly successful economically in Canberra even though their numbers are much smaller. Therefore, the case study provided an interesting comparative approach between two diasporic Greek communities in Australia. In total, 50 interviews were completed, with mainly first and second generation diasporic Greeks. A cross-section of participants was sought in order to examine notions of diasporic obligation and connections to Greece more broadly and to understand the potential role that factors such as gender, occupation and class played. Research initially centred around those involved with community organisations and community leaders which was linked to different subsets of the Greek diaspora based around origin in Greece but an attempt was also made to speak to those who were less connected to community groups.

### Connecting with Greece

Before discussing economic connections and the extent to which Greeks in Australia feel able to 'help' Greece, it is important to briefly highlight the socio-cultural feelings and connections of participants; this is because it was hard to neatly separate the socio-cultural from the economic in this research. Indeed, it should be stressed that the former is necessary for the latter to occur. The participants in this research stressed their socio-cultural connections with Greece; all seemed to be connected emotionally and symbolically through continuing to feel Greek in Australia. However, this feeling of Greekness varied. There were those who felt the need to subscribe to more ethno-national versions of Greekness (and this was not just the first generation, but also included the second) despite being Australian citizens, also feeling Australian (to a greater or lesser extent) and happily living in Australia. Others, and particularly the second generation, felt Greek, or Greek-Australian, or Australian-Greek as some put it, and were content to negotiate and acknowledge more hybrid, in-between identities, feeling part of both 'here' and 'there'; some, however, did acknowledge that this was problematic for them and particularly for their children and there were concerns about the 'dying out' of Greekness in Australia as future generations would not necessarily speak Greek or visit Greece regularly. This latter point caused some debate amongst participants; some were keen to stress the dynamic nature of the Greek diaspora as it reinvented itself over time, and that knowing Greek was not necessary in order to feel part of a Greek diaspora; others, however, felt that Greekness had to be kept alive, and this involved speaking Greek, and, if possible,

1 The research this chapter is based on was funded by an Australian National University Centre for European Studies Visiting Fellowship.

visiting Greece as often as possible. However, the ability of my participants to visit Greece varied widely; many wished to visit more often than was possible due to financial and family constraints. Those who went regularly were pleased they did so, stressing the importance of these material connections and the ability to engage with Greece more deeply. However, some noted the prevalence of insider/outsider relationships between them and non-diasporic Greeks; this led to them acknowledging that although they felt Greek, they were different to Greeks in Greece. Indeed this feeling resonated with many of my participants and ties in with research on diasporic Greek return which highlights the complex inclusions and exclusions that this can create (Christou, 2006a; Christou, 2006b). Nonetheless, many spoke very fondly and movingly of first and/or extended trips to Greece which had an important role to play in their constructions of Greekness in Australia and the need to remain connected to Greece. At the same time, it was evident that many particularly less well-off participants were wrapped up in their lives in Australia, and felt disconnected to an extent from Greece because of their inability to visit, or because they were more focused on 'here'. This was especially evident amongst second generation participants. However, all seemed to take an interest in what was going on 'there' and banal nationalism was very visible in their diasporic spaces, such as in community events in Melbourne or in the Greek Orthodox Church of St Nicholas and Hellenic Club in Canberra. Greekness was celebrated and participants seemed proud to be associated not just with Greece, but Hellenism more broadly. However, there was still evidence that they were loyal to the regions of Greece they and their families were from as they would make an effort to visit towns and villages of ancestral origin and know what was going on there.

Despite dense socio-cultural connections to Greece that most participants were keen to stress, they were less reticent to discuss their economic connections to Greece in any great detail. Many, particularly the first generation, had property in Greece, and had sent large sums of money to Greece, particularly in the past when Greece was struggling after the Second World War. They often felt that the Greek government had not publically acknowledged the important role their remittances had played. Tourism was another way many felt they were contributing to Greece financially. Some said explicitly that they spent large sums of money whilst they were there, in order to show how successful they were in diaspora, and to help Greece's often struggling economy, particularly in the regions they were from. Many also said that the only way they could currently help Greece economically was through buying Greek products, such as olive oil, herbs, and dairy products and engaging with as many Greek businesses in Australia as possible (e.g., cafes, restaurants, bakeries). Entrepreneurs also spoke of various import/export activities and trade relations that existed and/or that they were involved in. A representative of the HACCI stressed that there was capacity for increasing such activities but that an organised, sustained approach was needed; in particular, it was pointed out that the Greek state had to play more of a role in encouraging economic connections with Greece, rather than assuming they would happen. Thus, it



appeared that the most consistent economic connections involved remittances between family members, diaspora tourism, and investing in property, rather than any large scale business investments or trade relations. In particular, the attitude of many participants was that any economic connection they had with Greece was personal in nature, reflecting kinship networks and obligations to family, rather than any feeling that they were trying to aid development or economic growth in any way. This is reminiscent of Page and Mercer's (2012) plea to recognise the wider everyday lives and activities of those in diaspora that may or may not have repercussions on homeland development in direct or indirect ways.

### Helping Greece? Re-thinking Diasporic Obligation

Before an assessment of whether my participants felt able and willing to help Greece, it is necessary to summarise their perceptions of Greece politically and economically. For the vast majority, Greece represented a country governed by corruption with difficult and extreme bureaucracy, a bloated and inefficient public sector, blighted by persistent tax evasion, a lack of professionalisation and chaotic systems that didn't work properly. Certainly the picture that was painted was that Greece was not an easy country to invest in more formally and that the Greek state had not done much to either reach out to its diaspora to seek its economic assistance, or to make it easier for diasporic Greeks to invest and help its ailing economy. Many pointed out that they were used to the Australian way of doing business which was much more transparent, efficient and professional and they found it hard to get used to homeland Greek mentalities, particularly around corruption, tax evasion and mistrust of the state. It was such matters that often put them off wanting to invest, or indeed move back to Greece for any permanent period of time; this was felt particularly by the second generation who had been born and raised in Australia. Therefore, although they felt Greek emotionally, culturally and socially, they felt more 'at home' in Australia economically and politically. So, even though many had strong socio-cultural connections to Greece, and even if they visited often, this would not necessarily translate into feeling connected to the country politically or economically. This research suggests therefore, that even if those in diaspora have intense socio-cultural connections to their homeland and feel they still belong there emotionally, this does not mean that they can be relied upon to invest there, or help in other ways, in terms of economic growth and development. Diasporic obligation for my participants revolved around the personal and familial, both in the homeland, but especially in Australia; the 'here' came before the 'there' when it came to 'moral co-responsibility' (Werbner, 2002). Although Greek diasporic spaces in Australia are intimately linked to Greece in myriad, hybrid ways, it seemed that participants were able to pick and choose their obligations; they would help those who they felt deserved it and certainly it seemed that the second generation in particular did not feel any need to send money on a regular basis. This ties into research that complicated and deconstructs

the sending of remittances as normalised and unproblematic for those involved (Mohan, 2008; Lindley, 2009).

The vast majority were saddened by the economic crisis and the impact it was having on ordinary, less wealthy people but there was also anger and bitterness that this had happened, especially amongst the first generation. Such negative feelings amongst the first generation were linked to perceptions that the Greek government had abandoned them to an extent and hadn't publically acknowledged their role in helping Greece to develop economically after the Second World War as a result of their remittances. Such feelings also appeared to be linked to disconnectedness from the more traditional Greece they once knew, and romanticised in their early years of diaspora, that they perceived had changed for the worst. The general consensus amongst my participants was that it was not a surprise that this had happened and that the Greek state only had itself to blame. None were therefore sympathetic at all towards Greek politicians who they felt had to take responsibility for dealing with the situation. They felt sorry for ordinary Greeks caught up in the crisis but also felt that they needed to try and force their politicians to change and many also perceived what they saw as the Greek (lack of) work ethic and tax evasion as problematic. A motto that was mentioned many times was: 'the country is poor but its people are rich'. Their views were harsh on the whole and as a result they didn't see why they should help economically apart from on a personal level, and for some, even this was hard, either because of their own modest finances, or because they didn't feel their families necessarily deserved help. They were more likely to invest in diaspora tourism by spending money when they went, or building or renovating family properties. To invest more formally in businesses or set up trade networks was seen as difficult. As one second generation man put it: 'invest in what?' Greece was perceived to be lacking in industry and sound business investment opportunities and most didn't appear to feel it was their role to help set up businesses. In addition, little trust was placed in organisations such as the SAE, which elicited mixed responses on its effectiveness and ability to unite and mobilise the diaspora in Australia. When asked about other professional networks and associations, many felt there was under-used potential and that this may be a more promising way forward for diaspora Greeks to get involved in the homeland, and to help more broadly, using their skills and expertise rather than just via economic linkages. Again, however, the consensus was that the Greek government needed to ask them for such help if it wanted it, and this had not happened. For many, there was a feeling that there was a one-way and paternalistic relationship with the Greek diaspora in Australia and the Greek state; the government was happy to promote Greekness amongst those of Greek descent abroad through, for example, language programmes, but it made the assumption that Greeks would support Greece wholeheartedly because of their national background. Indeed, many pointed out that this appeared to be more the case for other issues such



as divided Cyprus and the naming of Macedonia.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, it does seem that certain nationalistic, political issues can garner more unity and support amongst the Greek diaspora in Australia for whom long-distance nationalism appears to be dynamic and negotiated in different ways and intensities depending on whether they perceive their help is justified.

However, a minority said that they would consider investing more heavily and formally if more favourable conditions were present and it was such members of the diaspora that groups such as the HACCI were presumably focusing on in terms of trying to encourage trade relations and homeland-oriented investment. Apart from these more positive feelings of potential assistance, the majority felt they did not want to help a government they did not trust in a country they felt was unstable and insecure politically and economically.

This 'choice' or decision to help or not to help was often one which was made with a heavy, weary heart and did not seem to be empowering in any way. Indeed, for many, they found it hard to think how they could help when asked; they did not necessarily construct sending money or helping friends and family out as 'helping'. The choice to not help, or the perceived inability to help resulted in ambivalent feelings of apathy, disillusionment and helplessness for many and served as a reminder that being and feeling in diaspora is not necessarily easy. Negotiating 'here' and 'there' particularly when 'there' is crisis-ridden is often problematic and accompanied by much soul-searching, connection and disconnection. The celebratory and positive 'in-betweenness' and 'third spaces' of diaspora do exist (Bhabha, 1994), and diasporas can and do play very positive roles in homeland development, peace and democracy (de Haas, 2005; Brinkerhoff, 2012; Bernal, 2013); however, the emotional and material repercussions of this liminality can be hard to deal with (Mavroudi, 2007b, 2008). This resonates with the pleas made by numerous scholars to 'ground' diasporas in everyday acts and to unravel and trace the repercussions of diasporic connections on lives and identities (Mitchell, 1997; Werbner, 2002; Ní Laoire, 2003). For those working on the linkages between diaspora and development, it is also a reminder that those in diasporas cannot be relied upon to help even in times of crisis, even if they have strong socio-cultural connections to the homeland, which they still feel they belong to. Therefore, there isn't a straightforward relationships between long-distance nationalism and diasporic obligation to help the homeland, which governments, both sending and receiving, need to be aware of.

2 Greeks (including my participants in diaspora) call Macedonia (the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – FYROM) Skopje because Macedonia is a region of Greece and they don't feel that it should be the name of the neighbouring country.

### Harnessing the Greek Diaspora in Australia?

Although feelings of long-distance nationalism, centred around a territorialised homeland may still be relevant as ways to try and entice one's diaspora to help, there is arguably a need for homeland governments to include, and engage with, a wider range of emigrants than many currently do. This is because there are ever more complex ways to belong to an area that is perceived to be a homeland, which do not fall within more narrow conceptions of ethno-national identity as imagined by many governments. It is for this reason that governments need to be aware of, and reach out to, their 'affinity' (Ancien, Boyle and Kitchin, 2009) and 'elective' diasporas (Jöns, Mavroudi and Heffernan, forthcoming), which involve broader definitions of who constitutes a country's diaspora. There is, therefore, a need for the Greek state and its formal diaspora bodies and organisations to take into account the dynamic nature of diasporic Greeks across time and space, recognising that obligation towards Greece is influenced by changing and complex diasporic identities and feelings of belonging that are in-between 'here' and 'there' and which do not fit easily into narrow versions of Greek ethno-nationalism as imagined by the Greek state. This chapter stresses that the Greek state has an uphill struggle in terms of fully engaging with its Australia diaspora beyond more simplistic expectations and assumptions about obligations to keep Greek ethno-nationalism alive in diaspora; rather it needs to show the Greek Australian diaspora that it can be trusted, and that efforts to minimise bureaucracy and corruption, and maximise practical help for Greek-Australian entrepreneurs to invest and set up business linkages with and in Greece, are taking place.

The chapter demonstrates that assumptions must not be made about diasporic obligation and helping the homeland. As Page and Tanyi argue in their chapter in this book, diasporic involvement in homeland-oriented development is a craft that is dynamic and can be learnt; however, at the same time those in diaspora can pick and choose who, what and when they help and why. At the same time though, this is not necessarily an easy, straightforward or empowering process but one that highlights the joys and difficulties of living and feeling in diaspora. It is such emotions and (dis)connections between here and there that research on diaspora and development, governments and policy-makers need to take into account.

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