

SEESOX workshop description (draft)
Friday 3 March 2017
European Studies Centre
9.30am until 3.30pm

Diaspora and Development: The case of Greece

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.

Session I

Brain drain dynamics

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

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.

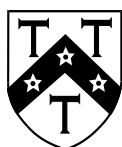
- What types of sociopolitical remittances may be expected to flow from the Diaspora to the homeland and what types of networks may be expected to emerge in a period when levels of trust towards established political institutions in Greece are extremely low?
- How can these new sociopolitical transnational 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

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?



SOUTH EAST EUROPEAN STUDIES AT OXFORD

EUROPEAN STUDIES CENTRE
ST ANTONY'S COLLEGE • OXFORD • OX2 6JF
TELEPHONE +44 (0)1865 274537 • FAX +44 (0)1865 274478

