Gkartzios M, Scott K. [A Cultural Panic in the Province? Counter-urban Mobilities, Creativity, and Crisis in Greece](#). *Population, Space and Place* 2015.
DOI: 10.1002/psp.1933

Copyright:

This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Gkartzios M, Scott K. [A Cultural Panic in the Province? Counter-urban Mobilities, Creativity, and Crisis in Greece](#). *Population, Space and Place* 2015, which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/psp.1933>. This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving.

DOI link to article:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/psp.1933>

Date deposited:

21/05/2015

Embargo release date:

11 May 2017

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 3.0 Unported License](#)

A Cultural Panic in the Province? Counter-Urban Mobilities, Creativity and Crisis in Greece

Menelaos Gkartzios and Karen Scott

Centre for Rural Economy,

School of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Newcastle University

Abstract

In this paper we explore the link between counter-urban mobilities and a potential emergent cultural economy in rural locations, associated with the economic crisis in Greece. Drawing on a quantitative survey of Athenian residents and qualitative interviews with counter-urban migrants, we observe that in the context of the economic crisis in Greece, many urban-based households have relocated or seek to relocate to the Greek province, creating perhaps a new paradigm for conceptualising rural mobilities and their associated transformations. In that regard, we observe that counter-urban mobilities are linked with changing cultural mobilities and phenomena including: a new wave of ideas and creative activities (characterised by voluntarism and collectivism) and a shift in the patterns of cultural consumption. Therefore, we stress the need for a reconceptualising of counter urban mobilities in this context and highlight the need for more research that explores the role of creative expression and activity in times of crisis, particularly in the context of supporting the opportunities that an organically-triggered rural cultural economy may offer.

A Cultural Panic in the Province? Counter-Urban Mobilities, Creativity and Crisis in Greece

Abstract

In this paper we explore the link between counter-urban mobilities and a potential emergent cultural economy in rural locations, associated with the economic crisis in Greece. Drawing on a quantitative survey of Athenian residents and qualitative interviews with counter-urban migrants, we observe that in the context of the economic crisis in Greece, many urban-based households have relocated or seek to relocate to the Greek province, creating perhaps a new paradigm for conceptualising rural mobilities and their associated transformations. In that regard, we observe that counter-urban mobilities are linked with changing cultural mobilities and phenomena including: a new wave of ideas and creative activities (characterised by voluntarism and collectivism) and a shift in the patterns of cultural consumption. Therefore, we stress the need for a reconceptualising of counter-urban mobilities in this context and highlight the need for more research that explores the role of creative expression and activity in times of crisis, particularly in the context of supporting the opportunities that an organically-triggered rural cultural economy may offer.

Introduction

This paper explores the interface between counter-urban mobilities and rural cultural economies in the context of the economic crisis in Greece. Through empirical work, we investigate the (potential and realised) exodus from Athens of younger crisis-hit households and how this is associated with a range of cultural mobilities and phenomena. We argue that this case offers new ways of thinking about mobility and creativity in times of crisis that is not reflected in the literature on either counterurbanisation or rural cultural economies.

Geographies of rural mobilities have attracted much research attention (Milbourne and Kitchen, 2014; Bell and Osti, 2010), particularly regarding internal (rural-in) migration trends associated with processes of counterurbanisation and gentrification (Mitchell, 2004; Stockdale, 2010). In academic, policy and lay discourses, rural areas are often portrayed as places of attraction, particularly for pre-retirement, middle class groups that seek to relocate due to a perceived higher quality of living in rural areas (see for example: Benson and O'Reilly, 2009). In addition, the recent interest in so-called creative economies has been

promoted within economic growth and regeneration narratives focussing on the clustering of creative businesses in cultural quarters in order to: create new markets and trends; create culturally diverse places to attract a mobile class of culture consumers, and; redevelop post-industrial sites (Florida, 2002; Landry, 2000). These ideas have been heavily debated in urban studies, and there is now a growing interest in research at the intersection of rural cultural economies and rural mobilities. However, much of this literature tends to focus on a type of 'cultural gentrification' caused by the type of groups discussed above who relocate to rural areas and are often interested in protecting and valorizing local cultural resources (Kneafsey, 2001; Vik and Villa, 2010). Although some studies discuss the 'downsizing' or 'downshifting' phenomena generated by those who relocate because of disillusionment with city living (Hamilton and Mail, 2003; Verdich, 2010), debates around mobility and creativity have seldom focused on periods of crisis.

Mobility research has paid attention to crisis mobilities associated with immigrant groups, the poor and refugees (see examples in Cresswell, 2006), but in this paper we focus on mobilities triggered by the economic crisis. We argue that the emergence of the global financial crisis and its territorial unevenness might trigger a wide range of urban-to-rural mobilities, involving diverse social and demographic groups that seek to relocate, not because of a better quality of life associated with rural living, but due to economic constraints and dereliction associated with urban living, suggesting perhaps new representations and meanings associated with urban and rural places. Therefore there is a need to explore the diversity of counter-urban mobilities and their effects in the current context of economic crisis.

This paper aims to address these gaps, by offering some empirical evidence drawing on data from both a household quantitative survey in Athens, and qualitative interviews with ex-Athenian residents. Our findings highlight, firstly, increased (potential and realised) counter-urban mobilities. Secondly, we find that these mobilities may be linked with a range of cultural mobilities and phenomena, creating a perceived 'cultural renaissance' in some cases, which may in turn be linked with increased levels of voluntarism, community solidarity and self-reflection. Therefore, we focus here on a particular aspect of a crisis-led counterurbanisation trend, that of its cultural effects. The paper is structured as follows. First, we critically review the literature on counter-urban mobilities. Secondly, we explore the literature surrounding rural cultural economies and creativity-led development, and its relevance to this context. The methodology and the Greek case study are then described, before we offer some evidence of crisis-hit emerging mobilities and their cultural effects. Ideas for further research are explored in our conclusions

Rural Mobilities

Recent academic accounts regarding the 'mobilities turn' or the 'new mobilities paradigm' (Urry, 2007; Sheller and Urry, 2006; Cresswell, 2006) have offered an exciting frame to (re)consider mobilities beyond migration and movement across spaces, but also to critically engage with diverse relational phenomena, representations, practices and experiences produced by mobilities (i.e. what do these mobilities mean and for whom? What representations are embodied through mobility? How do they impact on our understanding of places?). The mobilities literature has started to penetrate rural studies, particularly as regards migration which has been central to rural restructuring processes (see, for example,

special edition in *Sociologia Ruralis*, 2010). Milbourne and Kitchen (2014) position the mobility research in rural studies literature by arguing that:

[...] 'the rural' constitutes an extremely interesting case study of contemporary mobilities. Not only are rural places reshaped by complex patterns of movement in similar ways to cities but rural mobilities offer new perspectives on the complex interplay between movement, fixity and place, as well as the everyday problematics of mobility. (p. 327)

In this paper we focus on counter-urban mobilities, which have been discussed in the field for almost four decades now (Berry, 1976; Champion, 1989; Boyle et al., 1998), to describe broadly defined urban-to-rural relocations and subsequent spatial and socio-economic transformations. The counterurbanisation literature has highlighted the social groups involved (i.e. who are the counterurbanisers?), the drivers behind relocations (i.e. why do urban dwellers move to the countryside? Which rural areas are more subject to such transformations?), diverse representations associated with counterurbanisation (i.e. how do urban dwellers value and view rural lifestyles? What narratives in popular culture drive these constructs?), as well as the implications of such mobilities on shifting community power relationships, values and rural development narratives (i.e. what do these mobilities mean for new social actors and agents in regulating the countryside?) (see recent examples in: Bosworth and Atterton, 2012; Halfacree and Rivera, 2011).

Representations of mobility have also preoccupied researchers and, both in Britain but also internationally, the construction of a romanticised rurality, particularly amongst urban middle class residents is discussed, to rationalise such movements (van Dam et al., 2002). Such representations are important because, drawing on Cresswell (2006), they

demonstrate that counterurbanisation is associated with particular meanings and expectations, which constitute counterurbanisation both ideological and political. For example much research has demonstrated that rural areas offer spaces of 'rest, community, cultural belonging, stability, home and connections with nature' (Milbourne and Kitchen, 2014, p. 335). These representations exercised through counterurbanisation shift dynamics and power relations between 'local' and 'non local' groups, across classes and other identities (see also Cresswell, 2010). In this context it is useful to remember Cresswell's observations that:

[...] mobility is more than about just getting from A to B. It is about the contested world of meaning and power. It is about mobilities rubbing up against each other and causing friction. It is about a new hierarchy based on the ways we move and the meanings these movements have been given. (p. 265, 2006)

In the rural studies literature these new hierarchies are frequently discussed through Murdoch's et al. (2003) frame of the 'differentiated countryside', an exploration of the geography, mobility and power relations of various actors associated with rural development policy. For example the authors argue, drawing on Britain, that rural society, due to counterurbanisation, has become more 'middle class', which shifts rural politics and development narratives.

There are numerous typologies of counterurbanisation in the literature (see also Mitchell, 2004). Halfacree (2008) for example distinguishes between 'mainstream counterurbanisation' which involves the relocation of urban residents due to positive perceptions of living in rural areas, 'back-to-the-land counterurbanisation' which refers to radical lifestyle changes after the migration and involves marginal groups too, and, finally,

‘default counterurbanisation’ which refers to international migrants or to migrants whose relocation is incidental to the rural character of the destination. Despite these contributions, in light of Milbourne and Kitchen’s (2014) comments, the rural studies literature has been criticised, firstly, for overlooking other mobilities beyond counterurbanisation (for example: ephemeral, non uni-directional movements, beyond the urban and rural spatial orthodoxy; see also Milbourne, 2007; Halfacree, 2001).

Secondly, research on counterurbanisation has been criticised for its Anglophone focus which might have created a bias in the way that counterurbanisation theory is reproduced, particularly across non Anglophone countries (see also Halfacree, 2008; Gkartzios, 2013), despite, admittedly, the growth of international ‘counterurbanisation stories’ in recent years (i.e. Bijker and Haartsen, 2011; Grimsrud, 2011). For example, Anglophone research has in many cases highlighted the age and class dimensions of counter-urban mobilities. The colonisation of the countryside by an urban-based, aspirational middle class has been well discussed in the literature (Philips, 1993; Stockdale, 2010), which has resulted in a distinctively exclusive and unaffordable countryside, particularly in England (Shucksmith, 2000). Additionally, the research has highlighted the increased mobility of older (or pre-retirement) groups towards the countryside in Britain (Stockdale and MacLeod, 2013; Lowe and Speakman, 2006). However, less clear is how far these empirical observations and arguments go (Halfacree, 2008), particularly in countries where the rural idyll does not constitute such a dominant discourse (in both policy prescription and popular culture) as it does in British and North American contexts (Bunce, 1994; see also Lowe (2012) on the universality of Anglo-Saxon rural sociology).

Thirdly, beyond mobilities that are triggered by pull-led motivations in times of economic growth (see for example Gkartzios and Scott (2010)), less focus has been paid on crisis-led rural mobilities. The research has demonstrated the importance of conditions of economic stress in counterurbanisation, but the global financial crisis after 2007 requires further research to discuss such mobilities beyond the gentrification and rural idyll lenses that rural migration is usually associated with (some exceptions: Hugo and Bell, 1998; Foulkes and Newbold, 2008). Mitchell (2004) for example uses the term 'displaced-urbanisation' to describe relocations in rural areas motivated by the need for employment, lower costs of living and/or affordable housing.

This paper wishes to address these issues, firstly, by introducing a new cultural mobility associated with counterurbanisation in a period of crisis; and, secondly, by widening the lens of counterurbanisation research beyond Anglophone contexts.

Cultural economies, creativity-led planning and the rural

Gibson and Kong (2005:542) critically review the concept of cultural economy as 'one of a number of terms (including creative economy, cultural industries and creative class) where 'the "cultural" and "economic" collide'. The nouns 'culture' and 'creativity' are variously interpreted and associated with a diverse literature regarding their role in socio-economic development and policy. In order to define these concepts more clearly for the purposes of this paper we find Throsby (2008) helpful. Put simply, culture can either be defined in an 'anthropological sense' to mean shared ways of life, values and customs or in a 'functional sense' focussing on artistic practice and expression (Throsby 2008: 219). However, this

distinction is often blurred in attempts to characterise 'culture' for economic measurement purposes where 'culture and natural heritage' is listed alongside visual arts. Like Throsby, we take creativity to mean expression of imagination, the generation of original ideas and/or the production of novel ways to interpret the world. Although creativity is not specifically linked or limited to cultural production, there has been a discursive shift from wider narratives of cultural policy around cultural value to 'creative industries' as policy makers across Europe have sought to rebrand the role of culture in the economy to include industries like IT design and advertising which show high economic growth (Throsby, 2008; Oakley, 2009). The increased focus by policy makers on so called 'creative industries' as a spur for market innovations has created a 'creative imperative' (Rantisi et al., 2006: 1789). This has been focussed on large urban centres as 'The Creative City' and 'Creative Class' ideas took hold based on the work of academic-cum-policy entrepreneurs Charles Landry and Richard Florida (Florida, 2002; Landry, 2000; Landry and Bianchini, 1995). The focus has been on the agglomerations of creative industry in districts of major Western cities as a spur to investment and development (Gibson, 2010). An important aspect is the ability of such urban places to attract a highly mobile 'Creative Class', an economically elite of active consumers of culture who appreciate cosmopolitan city scenes.

The Creative Cities discourse has been heavily critiqued, no more eloquently than by Peck (2005) who argues that cultural elements and grass roots localism are dovetailed with market-orientated and individualistic development visions which benefit only a particular section of the population (2007). Both Landry and Florida have now acknowledged that despite creating economic growth these initiatives have failed to reduce inequality and other social problems (Macdonald, 2012; Stolarick et al., 2010). This literature leaves little

room for alternative conceptions of 'creativity-led planning models' based around social justice and community development and/or discussions of creativity in rural areas (MacDonald, 2012; Gibson and Kong, 2005; Sorensen 2009). The lack of research in rural areas and into different forms of creative expression have produced a bias in how the discourse of creativity and culture is mobilized in development narratives where the rural is areas seen as traditional, static and inward looking (Rantisi et al., 2006; Gibson, 2010; Bell and Jayne, 2010).

In the rural studies field, Chris Ray (2001: 16) recognized the rising interest in 'cultural markers as key resources in the pursuit of territorial development objectives' and proposed a parallel form of neo-endogenous development for rural areas which valorizes local distinctiveness. This is offered as a way for communities to commodify their local cultural and knowledge resources whilst nurturing a 'humanistic view of development' which enhances local identity, participatory democracy and 'economic and social well-being'. A small number of studies have shown how rural actors seek to rebrand themselves and their territory through cultural resources (see for example: Vik and Villa, 2010; Kneafsey, 2001). Furthermore, the rural studies cultural economy literature which focusses areas of socio-economic disadvantage often portrays local actors as static. Here the focus is on the inherent or hidden creativities of indigenous or remote communities (Macdonald, 2012; Richards and Wilson, 2007 Gibson and Kong, 2005).

There is a growing interest in research at the intersection of creative economy and counter-urban mobilities. Research on counterurbanisation has highlighted opportunities for rural development from attracting external capital and urban migrants, such as new rural businesses and demographic revival (Stockdale et al., 2000; Bosworth and Atterton, 2012).

More recent research has explored these in relation to the relocation of artists or the wider 'creative class' (for example: Herslund, 2012). However, some studies have argued that strategies to attract creative workers to rural areas is unlikely to produce large gains in hard economic indicators, but rather will enhance 'rural revitalisation' through 'less tangible socio-cultural' factors (Argent et al., 2013: 97). These studies reveal a complex picture which does not fit easily into Florida's recipe. For example, Verdich (2010) argues that migration can be either pre-meditated as a career strategy or reluctant, due to issues of affordability and economic stress in urban environments. In the particular case of artists, there is a lack of understanding of their complex employment patterns, the nature of their work and the related mobility decisions. Bennett (2010) finds, through empirical research in Australia, that often artists are reluctantly mobile due to economic necessity and make difficult trade-offs between securing work and staying within valued social networks/locations. Luckman's work (2012) has raised awareness of the complex 'affective relationship between place and creativity' for those artists choosing to locate in rural places in the UK and Australia (p. 47). Her work is interesting in the light of our findings regarding social activism because of her interest in the psycho-geographies of cultural work and her historical exploration of the social activism of the Arts and Crafts movement in UK as a way to interrogate contemporary motivations of rural arts workers.

All these contributions have much to offer the field, and speak to the complexities of the intersection of rural mobilities and cultural economies. However, they fail to speak to the example we offer in this paper: that of counter-urban mobilities due to economic crisis and the subsequent rural wellspring in cultural activities which are linked to new modes of

expression on the rural and economic context. This paper therefore attempts to make these links and suggest new directions for research.

Context and Methodology

This research focuses on Greece where there is some difficulty using a clear-cut dichotomy of urban and rural spaces, well-embedded in academic and policy discourses. Greece would be a rather paradoxical case, at least in a northern European context, in the way that urban/rural identities and spaces are not as separate or as distinct as usually discussed in the literature. In a characteristic urban-rural continuum, urban and rural spaces, networks, socio-economic activities and identities were never truly separated, due to the country's late urbanisation processes (Damianakos, 1997; 2002). Zacoboulou (2008) argues that, in the Greek case, the city never competed with the countryside, because urban and rural spaces were never truly disconnected. For this reason this paper purposely uses the term 'province' to refer to the destination of the (potential or realised) relocation. Instead of 'provinces', we use the term in its singular form (as this is how the term is used in Greek), to highlight multiple lay and academic constructions of rurality in different linguistic, social and cultural contexts that might be masked by universal uses of the Anglophone-led concept of rurality in the field (see also Gkartzios, 2013).

The Greek crisis is discussed in association with two EU/ECB/IMF orchestrated bail-outs, accompanied by a package of neoliberal policy reforms, involving public sector cutbacks, increases in taxation, reductions in wages and pensions, and resulting in unprecedented unemployment levels and poverty (see Pagoulatos, 2012). For example, according to the latest official figures, unemployment rose from 7.7 per cent in 2008 to 27.8 per cent in the

first quarter of 2014 (Elstat, 2014). Matsaganis and Leventi (2014) report dramatic increases in relative and extreme poverty.

In this context of a crisis, a study commissioned by the Greek Government (Ministry of Rural Development and Food, 2012) involving residents in Athens and Thessaloniki (Greece's main metropolitan areas) suggested a counterurbanisation trend towards the Greek province, which, unlike the experience in England for example, is characterised by younger populations and, for almost half of them, the desire to work in agricultural activities. Kasimis and Zografakis (2013) though have argued that the economic crisis and the return to agriculture are not exclusively related phenomena. The authors draw attention to a wide series of ongoing counter-urban mobilities in Greece that exhibit both necessity and choice, linked with 'back-to-the-roots' phenomena, but also with a new emergent spatial distribution of labour. Gkartzios (2013) has argued that apart from the 'back-to-the-land' movements that appear to dominate media and policy discourses, less attention has been paid to the mobility of urban households, who relocate to various localities in the Greek province, taking advantage of available housing and supporting family networks.

Empirically, the research draws on two different datasets. Firstly, the results draw on a quantitative survey of urban households in the greater urban conurbation of Athens. The survey took place in April 2013. It involved face-to-face interviews with 300 urban residents and explored their willingness to relocate to other areas in the Greek province. The survey was administered to a stratified random sample of urban residents by a professional marketing company. The geographic distribution of the sample was proportionate to the distribution of the actual population in the different regions of Athens based on Greek National Statistics.

Secondly, this paper draws on semi-structured interviews with 17 migrants (aged between 29 and 48 years old) who left Athens after the start of the financial crisis for the Greek province including villages, provincial towns or island destinations. The questions focussed on their experiences linked with counterurbanisation during this time. A snowball sampling technique was used to identify these migrants with the added element that one of the interviewees suggested other migrants with similar experiences through the use of Twitter. There was no focus on counter-urban artists in particular. The interviews took place in the summer of 2012. They were conducted in Greek, either by telephone or SKYPE due to problems of distance. Their duration varied from 40 minutes to more than one hour. All interviews were recorded, transcribed and translated from Greek to English and the analysis of the discourses presented in the following sections focused on 'creative' implications resulting from these mobilities.

Culture, mobilities, crises?

Potential Mobilities¹

The purpose of this section is to demonstrate the potential for crisis-led counter-urban mobilities. The results provided here are based on the household survey described above. The results are in accordance with the governmental report on a wave of potential urban exodus, particularly across younger households, triggered by the economic crisis. For example, 183 individuals (61 per cent) who were interviewed for this survey are considering moving out of Athens. A large majority of those expressed willingness to relocate within Greece (151 individuals or 50.3 per cent of the total sample), consisting our (potential)

¹ This section draws on an unpublished research report submitted to the Latsis Public Benefit Foundation (Gkartzios et al., 2013).

counterurbanisation sample. Finally, 32 individuals (10.6 per cent of the total sample) expressed a desire to leave their current residence for a different country.

T-testing between the sample who wishes to relocate (N = 151) and the sample who wishes to remain in Athens (N = 117) suggests that the two samples are statistically different with respect to age and unemployment status (see also Table 1). Mean age for the sample willing to relocate is 45.7, which is significantly lower than the mean age (51.3) for those willing to continue living in Athens. Similarly, our evidence suggests that the sample willing to relocate experiences significantly higher unemployment rates. Unemployment is 21.9 % for the counterurbanisation sample and 9.4 % for those not willing to move. Our results therefore suggest that the potential for counterurbanisation is a more likely choice for younger households, contrary to most British counterurbanisation studies. This highlights the role of the crisis in triggering such mobilities and suggests that the potential counterurbanisation of these migrants fits with notions of displacement-urbanisation (Mitchell, 2004).

Insert here Table 1

These 151 respondents were then asked how likely are to move to a more rural area in the next five years. 55% of our subsample declared being either likely or very likely to relocate. A follow up question was then asked examining whether respondents were more willing to relocate at the time of the survey compared to 5 years ago. 66% admitted that they were more willing to relocate at the time of the survey. Those respondents were then asked whether this is related to the economic crisis. The overwhelming majority (80%) replied positively. Respondents were finally asked where they would like to move to. The results exhibit strong preferences for rural (or 'more rural') residential environments: 86 per cent of the respondents would like to move to rural or semi-rural residential environments, typically

associated with the province (including the open countryside, villages and rural towns, using settlement classifications drawing on the Hellenic Statistical Authority). In particular, 44 per cent of the residents willing to relocate would like to move a village (defined as a settlement with less than 2,000 inhabitants), while 37 per cent would prefer to live in a small rural town (defined as a settlement of less than 10,000 inhabitants) (see also Table 2). The results of the survey therefore provide support for a crisis-led counterurbanisation trend that is currently discussed (Gkartzios, 2013; Kasimis and Zografakis, 2013).

Insert here Table 2

Regarding motivations for relocation (Figure 1), when the respondents were asked freely about the reason for relocating, this was commonly attributed to a series of perceptions associated with physical, social and economic features of rural living, resulting from comparing the destination with the current urban residence. For example, social features of the destination, such as the province offering a better quality of life, peace and quietness, a life without stress, were responses commonly mentioned. These are in line with the literature of positive representations of rural living, particularly amongst urban residents (see van Dam et al., 2002). Economic considerations associated with the crisis were mentioned as well, for example the destination offering a life with lower costs, opportunities for new employment, etc. (see for example ‘displaced-urbanisation’ by Mitchell, 2004).

Insert here Figure 1

Realised Mobilities

Unlike the previous section, exploring willingness to relocate, this section draws on interviews with residents who actually left the city of Athens after the start of the economic crisis in 2008. The interviewees moved to diverse localities in the Greek province, including rural areas, provincial towns and islands destinations, rather than a specific rural location.

In this section we seek to focus on a series of cultural mobilities and phenomena highlighted in some of the interviews, which form the basis for our exploration. For example, some interviewees frequently referred to increasing number of cultural activities in the areas they relocated, which, as mentioned before, were extremely heterogeneous. This suggests that some of these counter-urban mobilities were linked with a series of cultural mobilities as well, resulting from the influx of new (and younger) people in these localities and the activities they engaged with (including bottom-up collectives, exhibitions, theatre groups, film nights, music events, as reported in the interviews). The following quotes illustrate some of this 'cultural renaissance' across various destinations in the province:

There's something good about this crisis. It gave the opportunity to many people, young or old, who have lived for years in Athens or abroad, open minded people with talent and ideas, to create something in this place. I am talking about artistic and cultural events and the new ideas that start to develop. There is a wave of new people here and this has really helped (8)

I am involved in arts, I teach fine arts and design. The truth is that I wouldn't be able to do half of the things I do here in Athens. I am talking about student collectives and groups, exhibitions, theatre teams, film nights, everything we do with kids and adults that we didn't do in Athens. The first reason for this was the long distances [in Athens]. Secondly, there is a thirst here, even if in crisis arts and culture seem to be

devalued, there is a thirst for actually doing things here. And because nothing is easy, materials, conditions, spaces, our brain becomes more challenged and very creative. We work very well with children from the local community here, there is a high level of acceptance [...] There is this potential in crisis, to make you do new things, to think differently. Everything is different (6)

There is a local cultural group, a literature group, a theatre team has been born from this literature group; there is a choir [...] Recently, shortly after the crisis there was the creation of a local youth group that has been very active, they do radio, exhibitions, athletic activities, everything; they bring theatrical groups, they do concerts. The truth is that, this summer, the level of local activities was almost scary. [...] One day there might have been 3 different things that you could choose from. Panic! Summer was a cultural panic! (14)

The discourses highlight the collective and grass roots nature of much of these activities, as in many cases these activities revolved around community participation and engagement, demonstrating its experimental and improvisational qualities, rather than a cultural elite relocating to the countryside. Gibson and Klocker (2005) have discussed the need for the social qualities of creativity to be recognised, how it plays an important part in departures from the norm and provides space for radical ideas. Creativity can also be conceived as a type of continuous improvisation that helps people to adapt to changed circumstances (Edensor et al., 2010; Hallam and Ingold, 2007). This is a particularly important framing to think about in terms of economic crisis.

Furthermore, the discourses also highlight that, in the Greek context, countryside narratives hardly resemble notions of pre-industrial rurality and pastoralism usually discussed in

English academic literature (see for example Murdoch et al., 2003). The discourses exhibit that these rural areas and towns are seen as somewhat backward places, in need of modernisation and, perhaps, creativity. One of the interviewees for example, talked about 'cultural darkness' in the Greek province, which might be seen as Greece's own version of a rural 'cultural cringe':

The good thing about this crisis is that the Greek province has been elevated culturally. It seems to me that need makes people develop their own talents, I don't really know why. Instead of cultural darkness, things constantly develop here, small teams, theatre groups, which produce nice things and in the summer a lot of traveling artists are coming over. During the 'good years' artists were not touring, it was you that had to travel there [i.e. to Athens]. [...] Now these trips are hard to make. You have to think about it, the cost is big (2)

It is interesting to note in this extract also the suggestion of a new cultural mobility, that does not result from the counter-urban migration of these residents, but instead it is associated with the mobility of established acts and artists in big cities (for example Athens based theatre teams and artists touring more frequently in the Greek province).

Third, the interviews suggest that counter-urban migrants are not only cultural consumers, but actors as well. The opportunity of migrating to the province and being actively involved in the creative sector is exemplified by a trained actor, who moved from Athens with her partner and set up a 'creative enterprise':

The 'lab' is a cultural centre, a cultural enterprise that my partner and I set up. Basically it gives us the opportunity to do whatever we want. Arts, culture, creativity,

but whatever that means, with the widest sense. A flexible space for everybody, even scientists. To marry sciences with arts [...] We started very powerfully. The first weeks we were for free, we wanted to attract people, but also we wanted to get to know them. It was really interactive. The first weeks had to do with interplay; we wanted to see how things will develop. (16)

Beyond this so-called 'cultural renaissance', similar themes were discussed more generally in relation to community solidarity and engagement in times of crisis, which was expressed through various ways, such as activism and protest:

To tell you the truth there is something positive. There is a 'wave' of unprecedented solidarity, nothing like the years before (11)

I think this [i.e. demonstrations, strikes] was a necessary evil. I believe these things should take place, so I never felt angry with anybody. I took part in these processes, as much as I could. Even here, I try to be active in political affairs and protests. Because it is the only way to react to what has been going on and to feel myself that something might, say, change (2)

Finally, the counter-urban interviewees talked about an opportunity to re-examine life, values and to prioritise needs accordingly. The following quotes offer some examples of positive imagination for self-reflection and, perhaps, resistance, triggered by the economic crisis, but without necessarily overlooking it:

I see a need to re-examine our priorities. That was necessary for many and for me. What I mean is that our needs, material, spiritual, social and emotional, become clearer, more truthful. There is a sort of relocation of needs towards more

fundamental and necessary things. I hope that this crisis will help us operate in a more positive way (6)

For example you can't celebrate your kids' birthday like you wanted, or like you did the year before. And a nagging begins that money can't hide. Money covers things, but it is like patches. What will survive in this are relationships and situations that have foundations and real values. Everything fake will fall apart (3)

Generally there is misery and no opportunities at all and nothing can be done. But specifically for me, it [the crisis] has to do with believing in yourself, all the things you really wanted to do in life. As long as you believe this, you can do those things. That's the issue (16)

Discussion

The economic crisis offers a new context to conceptualise mobilities as well as emphasising the importance of discussing these mobilities in diverse cultural, economic and linguistic contexts. Greece offers an insightful case for exploring such mobilities due to the country's economic crisis, but also because of the coexistence of urban and rural identities and spaces (Damianakos, 2002). We make a number of observations from our analysis, which, more than anything else, seeks to inspire more research on such dynamic phenomena. Firstly, our data indicates increased levels of potential counter-urban mobilities, particularly amongst younger and unemployed households. This suggests that the countryside is viewed, at least in the mind of these urban dwellers, as a refuge in times of crisis (this is also suggested by Kasimis and Zografakis, 2012), adding perhaps new representations of the rural in the existing literature (Milbourne and Kitchen, 2014). However, more research would be

necessary to explore for example: to what extent these preferences for relocation will be met? Do these mobilities shift agents, values and interests that dominate local politics? What is the effect of such mobilities on countryside narratives and local power struggles (drawing on Cresswell, 2010)? How temporary (or not) are these mobilities? Will, for example, these migrants move back to urban environments if the economy picks up? What is the geography of the emerging kinetic and differentiated Greek province? (drawing on Murdoch et al., 2003)? Subsequently, what are the implications for rural and regional development resulting from these mobilities?

Secondly, there is evidence of changing cultural mobilities. This is comprised of three inter-related phenomena brought about by the crisis: urban migrants in general are constructed as agents of a 'new wave' of ideas, cultural activities (both commercial and non-commercial) and perhaps a more 'liberal' mind set, in contrast to a previous 'cultural darkness'; a once mobile rural/provincial audience going to access culture in the city, now becomes more immobile through financial constraints; and artists formally based in the city and taking mobile audiences for granted, now have to become mobile themselves and tour. Furthermore, the crisis-led mobilities are producing new subjectivities around values where there is a wider sense of community enactment and engagement in arts in a context of social solidarity and a strong commitment to forging new ways of thinking and expression. In this context, more research would be required to explore the extent to which these counter-urban migrants represent an economically elite similar to Florida's 'Creative Class' or are creating cultural communities to 'socialize the risk' associated with creative work and/or economic crisis (Rantisi et al., 2006). Future research could also explore if these mobilities can offer a new dimension of thinking resilience in times of crisis. What is the role

of culture and of the creative sector in performing community resilience? Does counter-urban mobility embody a practice of resistance to the crisis? How does the parallel discourse of solidarity, activism and resistance, observed in our exploratory interviews, interact with creativity and cultural initiatives?

Thirdly, our interviews provide some evidence of an emergent cultural *economy* amidst crisis, which has also recently attracted the attention of international media (i.e. Euronews, 2013). To what extent can policy makers recognise and take advantage of such opportunities in crisis? The link between creativity and crisis is, of course, not new. For example, Nerlich and Doring (2005) argue that the foot and mouth disease epidemic in the UK (arguably a period of crisis for the British countryside), also resulted in the flourishing of creative expression through poetry and art. In that regard, some of our interviewees also drew on a crisis/opportunity paradox, although there was also resistance in using the term opportunity explicitly, obviously because of the struggles that many people are going through. Our findings suggest that this emergent cultural economy occurs rather organically, within a 'do-it yourself' context, instead of it being envisaged in local strategies and led by local authority policies. Most of the activities mentioned in the interviews are based on voluntarism, although a case of setting up a creative enterprise was also reported (albeit with a strong community focus). More research could explore how far socially-led planning models of a cultural economy (see for example Ray, 2001 or MacDonald, 2012) speak to these new forms of cultural activity and their potential economies. Research could investigate how such cultural actors produce activities/art that not only earns them a living and contributes to local economic sustainability, but seeks to recognise and undermine

neoliberal trends. Luckman's (2012) work suggests this in UK context but is lacking the crisis context and different geographical focus we offer here.

We suggest that detailed exploration of crisis-induced cultural initiatives is a useful lens to understand how these mobilities affect and are negotiated by local and counter-urban residents, and how creative expression can articulate resistance and solidarity as well as future imaginations of society and community in times of austerity. We urge scholars to recognise these cultural phenomena and their importance for aiding our understanding of new social structures, spatialities and identities in rural areas in Greece and other countries undergoing such economic crises.

References

- Argent N, Tonts M, Jones R and Holmes J. 2013. A creativity-led rural renaissance? Amenity-led migration, the creative turn and the uneven development of rural Australia. *Applied Geography* 44: 88-98
- Bell, MM and Osti G. 2010. Mobilities and ruralities: an introduction. *Sociologia Ruralis* 50:199-204.
- Bell D, Jayne M. 2010. The Creative countryside: Policy and Practice in the UK Rural Cultural Economy. *Journal of Rural Studies* 26: 209–218.
- Bennett D. 2010. Creative Migration: a western Australian case study of creative artists. *Australian Geographer* 41:117-128
- Berry B (1976). *Urbanisation and Counterurbanisation*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.
- Benson M, O'Reilly K. 2009. Migration and the search for a better way of life: a critical exploration of lifestyle migration. *The Sociological Review* 57 608-625.
- Bijker RA, Haartsen T. 2011. More than Counter-urbanisation: Migration to Popular and Less-popular Rural Areas in the Netherlands. *Population, Space and Place* 18:643-657.
- Bosworth G, Atterton J. 2012. Enterpreneurial in-migration and neoendogenous rural development. *Rural Sociology* 77: 254-279.
- Boyle P, Halfacree K, Robinson V. 1998. *Exploring Contemporary Migration*. Longman: Essex.
- Bunce M, 1994. *The Countryside Ideal*. Routledge: London.
- Champion AG. 1989. *Counterurbanization: The changing pace and nature of population deconcentration*. Edward Arnold: London.
- Cresswell, T. 2006. *On the move: mobility in the modern western world*. Routledge: New York.
- Cresswell T. 2010. Towards a politics of mobility. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 28:17-31.
- Damianakos S. 1997. The Ongoing Quest for a Model of Greek Agriculture. *Sociologia Ruralis* 37:190-208.
- Damianakos S. 2002. *From peasant to farmer. The Greek rural society against globalisation*. Exandas-EKKE: Athens [in Greek].

- Edensor T, Leslie D, Millington S and Rantisi N. 2010. *Spaces of Vernacular Creativity: Rethinking the Cultural Economy*. Routledge: Abingdon.
- Elstat. 2014. Labour force survey for the first quarter of 2014, http://www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESYE/BUCKET/A0101/PressReleases/A0101_SJO_01_DT_QQ_01_2014_01_F_EN.pdf
- Euronews. 2013. Crisis inspires a surge of creativity in Greece, <http://www.euronews.com/2013/12/13/crisis-inspires-a-surge-of-creativity-in-greek-art/>
- Florida R. 2002. *The Rise of the Creative Class*. Basic Books: New York.
- Foulkes M, Newbold B. 2008. Poverty Catchments: Migration, Residential Mobility, and Population Turnover in Impoverished Rural Illinois Communities. *Rural Sociology* 73:440–462.
- Gibson C, Klocker N. 2005. The 'Cultural Turn' in Australian Regional Economic Development Discourse: Neoliberalising Creativity? *Geographical Research* 43:93–102.
- Gibson C, Kong L. 2005. Cultural economy: a critical review. *Progress in Human Geography* 29(5): 541-561.
- Gibson C. 2010. Guest editorial – Creative geographies: tales from the 'margins'. *Australian Geographer* 41: 1-10.
- Gkartzios M. 2013. 'Leaving Athens': Narratives of counterurbanisation in times of crisis. *Journal of Rural Studies* 32: 158-167.
- Gkartzios M, Scott M. 2010. Residential mobilities and house building in rural Ireland: evidence from three case studies. *Sociologia Ruralis* 50: 64-84.
- Gkartzios, M., Garrod, G and Remoundou, K. (2013). 'Going rural': Counterurbanisation in times of crisis. Report submitted to the Latsis Public Benefit Foundation. Athens: Latsis Foundation.
- Grimsrud GM. 2011. How well does the 'counter-urbanisation story' travel to other countries? the case of Norway. *Population, Space and Place* 17: 642-655.
- Hallam E, Ingold T. 2007. Creativity and cultural improvisation: an introduction in Hallam E, Ingold T (eds) *Creativity and Cultural Improvisation*. Routledge: London.
- Halfacree K. 2001. Constructing the object: taxonomic practices, 'counterurbanisation' and positioning marginal rural settlement. *International Journal of Population Geography* 7:395-411.

- Halfacree K. 2008. To revitalise counterurbanisation research? Recognising an international and fuller picture. *Population, Space and Place* 14: 479-495.
- Halfacree K, Rivera MJ. 2011. Moving to the countryside ... and staying: lives beyond representations. *Sociologia Ruralis* 52: 92-114.
- Hamilton C, Mail E. 2003. Downshifting in Australia. A sea-change in the pursuit of happiness. The Australia Institute. Discussion Paper Number 50, http://www.tai.org.au/documents/dp_fulltext/DP50.pdf
- Herslund L. 2012. The Rural Creative Class: Counterurbanisation and Entrepreneurship in the Danish Countryside. *Sociologia Ruralis* 52:235–255.
- Hugo G, Bell M. 1998. The hypothesis of welfare-led migration to rural areas: the Australian case. In *Migration into Rural Areas*, Boyle P, Halfacree K (eds). Wiley: Chichester.
- Kasimis C, Zografakis S. 2012. 'Return to the land': rural Greece as refuge to crisis. Paper Presented at the XIII World Congress of Rural Sociology, July 29 to August 4, 2012, Lisbon, Portugal
- Kasimis C, Zografakis S. 2013. The countryside, agriculture and the crisis. In *Back to Agriculture?* Kasimis C, Zografakis, S (eds). *Quarterly Political and Economic Review: International and European Politics*: 13-27 [In Greek].
- Kneafsey M. 2001. Rural Cultural Economy: Tourism and Social Relations. *Annals of Tourism Research* 28: 762-783.
- Landry C. 2000. *The Creative City*. Earthscan: London.
- Landry C, Biachini F. 1995. *The Creative City*. Demos/Comedia: London.
- Lowe P, Speakman L. 2006. *The Ageing Countryside: The Growing Older Population of Rural England*. Age Concern: London.
- Luckman S, 2012. *Locating Cultural Work: The Politics and Poetics of Rural, Regional and Remote Creativity*. Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke.
- MacDonald G. 2012. Making Creativity Social: Exploring Alternative Creativity-led Planning Frameworks in Tanna, Vanatu. Martin Prosperity Institute, University of Toronto Working paper series Ref: 2012-MPIWP-010.
- Matsaganis M, Leventi C. 2014. Poverty and Inequality during the Great Recession in Greece. *Political Studies Review* 12: 209–223.
- Milbourne P. 2007. Re-populating rural studies: migrations, movements and mobilities: *Journal of Rural Studies* 23:381-386.

- Milbourne P, Kitchen L. 2014. Rural mobilities: Connecting movement and fixity in rural places. *Journal of Rural Studies* 34:326-336.
- Ministry of Rural Development and Food, 2012. *Press Release 27/3/2012* [In Greek], <http://www.minagric.gr/index.php/el/the-ministry/grafeiotypou/deltiatypou/516-dt27032012.html>
- Mitchell CJA. 2004. Making sense of counterurbanization. *Journal of Rural Studies* 20: 15-34.
- Murdoch J, Lowe P. 2003. The preservationist paradox: modernism, environmentalism and the politics of spatial division. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 28:318-332.
- Murdoch J, Lowe P, Ward N, Marsden T. 2003. *The Differentiated Countryside*. Routledge: London.
- Nerlich B, Döring B. 2005. Poetic Justice? Rural policy clashes with rural poetry in the 2001 outbreak of foot and mouth disease in the UK. *Journal of Rural Studies* 21:165–180.
- Oakley K. 2009. The disappearing arts – creativity and innovation after the creative industries. *The International Journal of Cultural Policy*. 15: 403-413
- Pagoulatos G. 2012. Desperately hanging on: A euro-crisis view from Greece. European Council on Foreign Relations, “Reinvention of Europe” series, http://ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR_Greece_paper_20122.pdf
- Peck J. 2005. Struggling with the creative class. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 29: 740-770.
- Philips M. 1993. Rural gentrification and the processes of class colonisation. *Journal of Rural Studies* 9:123–140.
- Rantisi N, Leslie D, Christopherson S. 2006. Guest editorial. Placing the creative economy: scale, politics, and the material. *Environment and Planning C* 38: 1789-1797.
- Ray C. 2001. Culture Economies: a perspective on local rural development in Europe. Centre for Rural Economy, Newcastle University, Newcastle, England, <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/cre/publish/Books/CultureEconfinal.pdf>
- Richards G, Wilson J. 2007. *Tourism, Creativity and Development*. Routledge: London.
- Sheller M, Urry, J. 2006. The new mobilities paradigm. *Environment and Planning A* 38:207-226.
- Shucksmith M. 2000. Exclusive countryside? Social inclusion and regeneration in rural Britain. Joseph Rowntree Foundation: York.

- Sociologia Ruralis. 2010. Special Issue on Mobilities and Ruralities. *Sociologia Ruralis* 50:199-204.
- Sorensen A. 2009 Creativity in Rural Development: an Australian response to Florida (or a view from the fringe). *International Journal of Foresight and Innovation Policy* 5:24-43.
- Stockdale, A. 2010 The diverse geographies of rural gentrification in Scotland. *Journal of Rural Studies* 26: 31-40.
- Stockdale A, Findlay A, Short D. 2000. The repopulation of rural Scotland: opportunity and threat. *Journal of Rural Studies* 16:243-257.
- Stockdale A, MacLeod M. 2013. Pre-retirement age migration to remote rural areas. *Journal of Rural Studies* 32: 80-93.
- Stolarick K, Hracs B, Florida R. 2010. Occam's curse, dialectics, and the creative city. *City, Culture and Society* 1: 175-177.
- Throsby D. 2008. Modelling the cultural industries. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*. 14: 217-232.
- Urry J. 2007. *Mobilities*. Polity Press: Cambridge.
- van Dam F, Heins, S, Elbersen BS. 2002. Lay discourses of the rural and stated and revealed preferences for rural living: Some evidence of the existence of a rural idyll in the Netherlands. *Journal of Rural Studies* 18: 461-476.
- Verdich M. 2010. Creative Migration? The attraction and retention of the 'creative class' in Launceston, Tasmania. *Australian Geographer* 41: 129-140.
- Vik J, Villa M. 2010. Books, Branding and Boundary Objects: On the Use of Image in Rural Development. *Sociologia Ruralis* 50(2): 156–170.
- Zacopoulou E. 2008. The triumph of the peasant: Damianakos' thesis on Greek rurality. In: *Rurality, Society and Space*, Zacopoulou E, Kasimis C, Louloudis L (eds). Athens: Plethron [in Greek].

Acknowledgements

This paper was presented at the XXV European Society for Rural Sociology congress in 2013. We are extremely grateful to the constructive comments made by the reviewers and to a number of colleagues. Many thanks to Kyriaki Remoundou for her help with the analysis of

the quantitative data. The quantitative survey results reported in this paper were part of a wider research project funded by the John S. Latsis Public Benefit Foundation. The sole responsibility for the content of this paper lies with the authors.

Tables

Table 1: Characteristics of the two samples

Characteristic	Counterurbanisation Sample (N = 151)	Sample 'not willing to relocate' (N = 117)	T-testing
	Mean (St Deviation)		P-value
Gender (male=1)	0.52 (0.50)	0.47 (0.50)	0.45
Age	45.7 (15.2)	51.34 (17.79)	0.005
Employment (Full-time, >30 hours)	0.40 (0.49)	0.35 (0.48)	0.47
Employment (part-time, 15-30 hours)	0.03 (0.18)	0.009 (0.09)	0.18
Employment (part-time, < 15 hours)	0.02 (0.14)	0.009 (0.09)	0.46
Not working (includes unemployed, retirees, housekeepers)	0.55 (0.50)	0.63 (0.49)	0.19
Unemployed	0.22 (0.41)	0.09 (0.29)	0.006
Net monthly household income	2.65 (1.28) Corresponds to €1000- €1500	2.56 (1.33) Corresponds to €1000- €1500	0.64

Note: P-values in bold denote significant differences

Table 2: Crisis counterurbanisation questions (N=151)

Question	Mean
How likely are you to move to a more rural area in the next 5 years?	
Very unlikely	0.16
Unlikely	0.29
Likely	0.39
Very likely	0.16
Compared to 5 years ago, would you say that you are more willing to relocate today?	
Yes	0.66
No	0.34
If yes, would you say that this is mainly due to the current economic crisis?	
Yes	0.80
No	0.20
Where would you like to move to?	
The open countryside	0.05
A village (< 2,000)	0.44
A rural town (2,000 – 10,000)	0.37
A town (10,000 – 100,000)	0.13
Same or different city (> 100,000)	0.01

Figure 1: Motivation for relocation (frequency of response; multiple responses per individual were allowed) (N = 151)