Voting with their Feet:
Highly skilled Emigrants from Southern Europe:
Anna Triandafyllidou
Eurozone Crisis 2008-today

• Unemployment (GR: 12% => 26%, 48% youth, IT: 10% => 12% but 40% youth)

• Mobility limited – big media hype but lack of data as intra EU mobility is registered with a delay or not at all

• Selective mobility: not those who suffer most but relative deprivation and human/social capital
Net emigration rate = (emigrants-immigrants)\*1000 inhabitants.

Source: Eurostat Database online, 2015 [migr_emi1ctz, migr_imm1ctz].
Research Design

Online survey in spring-summer-fall 2013

Five crisis countries – southern Europe and IRL

919 valid responses of Greeks abroad

901 valid responses of Italians abroad

Not representative (purposive online) sample but rich and insightful - **Targeted highly skilled individuals who have already emigrated**
Description of Sample

2/3s male
50% 30-45 years of age
50% of Greeks 40% of Italians under 30
90% hold University degree
Nearly 50% had MA or PhD (10-15%)
Theoretical insights – Exploratory study

We assumed good information and cost-benefit calculation before migrating – neoclassical economics: expected return of their human capital (higher wages or occupational upgrading)

Network Theory: interpersonal and social ties

Relative deprivation: accustomed to a certain lifestyle – future of the children
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main reasons for leaving</th>
<th>Italians</th>
<th>Greeks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was unemployed</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My salary was very low</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No opportunity for further profession</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To improve my academic/ professional training</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My quality of life was overall rather poor</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I saw no future for me in the country</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wanted a better future for my children in a new country</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To try a new experience, a new adventure</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I could find better business opportunities here</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>329</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Main reasons for leaving
Corruption and nepotism
Internal relative deprivation – those who have the right connections get the jobs
International relative deprivation – opportunities in other countries
Choosing a Destination Country

Main destination countries
UK, Germany, Netherlands and Belgium, other EU countries

74% of IT and 84% chose the specific country

Main reasons:
Better career opportunities, better income, better quality of life, knowledge of language, no visa restrictions
Framing the migration project - Discursive strategies

Constructive – Agency over one’s life – Achiever – paradise does not exist but.. Carefully ponder…

Transformative – Forced to but then turned into a positive narrative of opportunity and change

Destructive / Preservative: Nostalgia, would rather have stayed and contributed – I like my country but was treated as a young boy here I am a professional.
Concluding Remarks

No use of past networks of earlier migrations
Choice driven by relative deprivation and expected high returns (not only monetary) of own human capital (Unemployment not important)

Strong notion of agency

Different discursive strategies making sense of migration experience show the multiplicity of forms and meanings that international mobility takes today