

# Bloggng: The use of digital representation of the migration experience

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To understand the migrant experience, researchers have traditionally used methods such as ethnography and the analysis of written records to analyse the process of migration; however a new primary source – new-media or digital records – is becoming more and more relevant to the field. The new primary sources take many forms, but a common new-medium, used by those migrating from Greece in the second decade of the twenty-first century, is that of blogs. This preliminary and exploratory study seeks to examine blogs written by people choosing to leave Greece. Using a qualitative analysis of themes extrapolated from blog posts, both personal and practical, this study illustrates themes discussed by bloggers to communicate their experience, and suggests further uses for new-media in the field of migration studies.

## Introduction

The act of migration and the formation of a new home in a foreign land have been described as a trauma resulting in homelessness, and in turn resulting in a reconstruction of identity and belonging (Glenn, Floriani & Bouvet, 2011:1–3). Migrants have a long tradition of recording the details, both emotional and practical, of this trauma. Previously, the record has taken many forms, including correspondence to family at 'home', documentation in the print and electronic media, other archival resources, personal journals, and ethnographic studies. All of these types of communication represent old-media formats.

Over the past century, Greek migration, including migration to Australia, has been the result of waves of push and pull factors. The historical, sociological, cross-cultural and economic aspect of this Greek migration to different parts of the world has been the focus of many research studies. The motives for leaving Greece, as well as living or working conditions and integrating experiences of migrants relating to the place of settling, have been recorded by researchers, analysed, and reported on.<sup>1</sup> These

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<sup>1</sup> There are a number of researchers who have published books and articles on Greek Migration to

research projects have contributed to the representation of the lived experience, and added to the construction of the overall Greek migration narrative.

Currently, with the new Greek migration trends under way and rising due to the economic crisis, a large number of people from Greece migrate to many countries, including Australia, in search for a new life. Many of these new migrants, being digitally aware, opt to record and report on their experience using media such as Facebook, Twitter or blogs. These digital accounts, using new-media formats, provide other prospective migrants with valuable information regarding the migration process.

This paper explores the nature of these digital records, or new-media. A number of blogs, both personal blogs and those on forums dedicated to communication between Greek migrants, are examined. Blogs have been selected, rather than other forms of new-media, as open-source material in the public domain. From these digital blogs or journals a number of themes have been extrapolated, including those related to the financial aspects of adapting to a new country, social and community interaction with new Greek migrants and the established Greek-Australian communities, and the nostalgia for the Greece that has been left behind. This preliminary, exploratory study seeks to determine themes that are developed in these blogs, and suggest areas in which they could contribute to the broader understanding of the migration experience generally and Greek migration specifically.

## Post-World War II immigration of Greeks to Australia

Mass or chain assisted and unassisted post-war migration of Greeks to Australia begins officially in 1952. The Migration Agreement signed between Greece, Australia and the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM) in 1952 set in motion the immigration of predominantly male workers to Australia, who in turn nominated family members, spouses and brides to the country (Palaktsoglou, 2013:295).

As brief background information, it can be said that ICEM organised a migration programme which aimed at resolving issues of excess population in Europe, at the same time addressing the individual needs of the host countries. The countries which agreed to accept immigrants were: United States of America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Argentina, Brazil and Venezuela, while those from which people emigrated, were predominantly: West Germany, Italy, Austria, Greece, and the Netherlands. In 1952 alone, the movement of 115,000 Europeans was arranged, of whom Australia agreed to accept 25,000 immigrants (NAA, 1962298:30). In Australia, new immigrants were mainly destined for the construction of infrastructure projects and agricultural works (NAA, 1962298:39).

For Greece, its membership to ICEM, and the consequent Migration Agreement signed with many countries appeared as a solution to its Post World War II

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Australia. Indicative examples include: Gilchrist, H., *Australians and Greeks* (III volumes) and Tamis, A., *Η Ιστορία των Ελλήνων της Αυστραλίας* (II volumes).

socio-political and economic problems: high unemployment, poverty and political instability (Dimitreas, 1995:166). In 1952 alone, 20,000 Greeks planned to emigrate mostly to the United States, Canada and Australia (*Ελευθερία*, 25/4/1952), though this plan never fully eventuated and many Greeks were left disappointed and in financial turmoil.<sup>2</sup> Under the ICEM Migration Agreement, the Greeks who qualified for emigration were mainly: young healthy men, preferably single who had agreed and signed a two year employment contract. Some married men and their families were also chosen and were given assistance for their passage (Palaktsoglou, 2013: 293–294). In January of 1953, the first ICEM Greek emigrants embarked on their long sea-journey to Australia; they were 86 individuals, with 10 women and 7 children under the age of 15 amongst them (*Εμπρός*, 30/1/1953). During the same year, 500 Greeks — mostly males — migrated to Australia with assisted passage, destined for employment in rural areas.

During the twenty-year period 1952–1972, the number of Greek immigrants who arrived in Australia with assisted passage was 71,221 (Palaktsoglou, 2013:294) while the overall number of Greek immigrants (assisted and self-funded) was around 180,000 (Λαφιατόγλου, 2009:99).<sup>3</sup> Greek immigration to Australia waned after 1972 and, by the late seventies, with the economic and political circumstances in Greece improving, came to a standstill.

In recent years, there has been a new wave of Greek migration to Australia with many Greeks seeking either temporary employment or permanent settlement in the country. The current wave of Greek migration is the result of a severe economic crisis and fiscal conditions in Greece since 2009. Current unemployment trends in Greece are extremely high, impacting the Greek population, young and old. The rise of unemployment rates in Greece between 2007 and 2013, in particular for the youth which peaked in 2013 at 58.3%, is dramatic (Tsingas, 2014:24). Under these dramatic circumstances, many Greeks decided to migrate mainly to Europe, the United States and Australia. Therefore, since 2009 a new wave of Greek migrants has been hitting Australian shores. Many claim that the number of the new Greek arrivals is in the thousands;<sup>4</sup> Australian Government officials dispute this, and claim that Greek migrant numbers are significantly lower.<sup>5</sup> The reason being, that the majority of what

<sup>2</sup> In the newspaper *Εμπρός* the predicament of many Greeks – potential migrants – was reported on in a negative tone in an article entitled: “Διατί απέτυχε η δωρεάν μετανάστευσις; (Why has free Migration failed)” (*Εμπρός*, 6/7/1952). The article claims that many Greeks had invested in the idea of migrating to Australia and had sold their properties in order to have enough money to arrange for their applications.

<sup>3</sup> According to Λαφιατόγλου the numbers of assisted and unassisted immigrants to Australia are as follows: Unassisted – 69,356 and Assisted through ICEM – 109,775 (Λαφιατόγλου, 2009:99).

<sup>4</sup> In 2013 the Australian Department of Immigration claimed that working visas being granted to Greek nationals had been on the rise (Sweet, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> In early 2012 it was reported that the “immigration statistics show around 280 expatriates – mostly families and skilled migrants – have come back to Australia over the past year but the total number of Greek citizens in Australia is expected to be higher, with many more here on holidays” (ABC News, 27 May 2012).

others define as migrants hold Australian citizenship either by descent or by birth and they are regarded as Australian citizens returning to the country for permanent residency.<sup>6</sup> For migrants or Australian citizens returning “home”, we can observe distinct difference between these new migrants and the ones of the fifties and the sixties. The most noticeable difference is that the majority of the new migrants are well educated individuals, who speak English well and have high command of new technology. As Victoria Kyriakopoulos claims:

Unlike the post-war wave of largely poorly educated, unskilled emigrants from rural areas with no English, many of those leaving Greece today are urban, educated and middle-class, often arriving with young families. [...] Those arriving now are more aware of the requirements and social media networks are helping people connect and stay informed. (Kyriakopoulos, 2014)

These well-educated and technologically savvy migrants are the authors who create and maintain the migration blogs which are examined in this study.

## Development of the blogging phenomenon and its use in academic research

The digital world can often be seen as being synonymous simply with “the internet”. Considering the pervasiveness of the online world, it is easy to forget that it is a relatively new phenomenon. The internet first came into existence in the very early 1990s (Walker Rettberg, 2008:22–30), but at that time was relatively inaccessible to those without a knowledge of the programming language HTML. Since that time its rise has been meteoric. Yet, websites that are now part of the daily vocabulary are surprisingly new, with Facebook coming into existence in 2004, YouTube in 2005, and Twitter in 2006 (Golbek, 2013:3; Thumim, 2012:141). With these timelines in mind, it is interesting to note that since its inception the web has been a tool by which individuals communicate, either with specific individuals (referred to as *nodes*), or by posting online content, to be consumed by whoever may come across it. Blogging — or web logging — is one method by which both individuals and organisations participate in this communication, and Blogger, which was created in 1999, is still a common platform through which blogging takes place. By 2007, the blog search engine Technocrati.com was tracking 70 million blogs, so expansive has the use of blogs become (Walker Rettberg, 2008:30).

The phenomenon of blogging has garnered wide academic attention, from a general systems perspective (Khan, 2013), tracing how networks of users are formed

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<sup>6</sup> The Australian Ambassador to Greece, Ms Jenny Bloomfield, claimed that the number of new Greek migrants to Australia was significantly lower than the one reported in the news, and she proceeded to clearly state that the holders of Australian citizenship who expressed their willingness to return to Australia were not included in the migrants’ numbers (January 2013).

around areas of discussion (Highfield, Kirchhoff & Nicolai, 2011), to the social usefulness of blogging (Aday et al., 2010), or elements of blog design (Papacharissi, 2007). Those who consider the outcomes of individual blogs often do so from the perspective of what are known as filter sites, or sites that provide information to a large group of people, such as during political movements or uprisings (Aday et al., 2010; Loewenstein, 2008; Herring et al., 2007:4). Whether they are filter sites or truly independent blogs, trends that can be distinguished in the types of content covered in blogs is commonly analysed academically. Those that deal with politics, or political events, for example *The Huffington Post* (2015), or *Daily Kos* (2015), are commonly used. These draw posts and discussion, normally on significant global or domestic political issues, and attract large numbers of posts and contributions, through the posting of comments from a number of nodes, sometimes significantly dispersed either geographically or philosophically. The use of blogging in education, to enhance or examine learning outcomes is also a common application of blogging analysis (Deng & Yuen, 2011; Kim, 2008), with the construction and textual analysis of blogs used to develop classroom tools, or to provide an outlet for teachers and students to reflect on the learning experience (Churchill, 2009; Deng & Yuan, 2011; Williams & Jacobs, 2004; Yang, 2009).

Another significant use of blogs by researchers is in the area of trauma. Blogs can be used by individuals to record the process, physical and emotional, of serious illness (McCosker & Darcy, 2013), or as a form of therapy in areas such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Hoyt & Pasupathi, 2008). Blogs can also be used by both individuals and groups to share information about trauma, individual experiences or practical information. The terrorist attacks on New York City on 11 September 2001, provide not only an example of use of blogs to articulate trauma, but also mark one of the pivotal points at which the use of personal blogs grows (Paganoni, 2011:279; Tremayne, Zheng, Lee & Jeong, 2006:290). The blogs that were started in the days, weeks and months after September 11 form a large collection in the blogging archives. As the central site nyc bloggers (sic) (nyc Bloggers, nd) states:

It was a defining moment for all New Yorkers, and in a lesser way, for blogs. We all turned to our blogs to write about our experience, our feelings, our anger and our fears and our grief.

At the outset of this paper, migration was similarly described as a type of trauma. As such, it should not be surprising that those who have undergone the trauma of migration choose to document and share their experiences in this thoroughly contemporary manner. How these experiences are documented using new-media is one of the foci of this paper.

Although much has been written on the machinations of blogging, as described above, the personal, or journal style blog, has not been as strong a focus of research, as the larger filter, or feeder style blogs (Herring et al., 2007:3). Regardless of the genre of blog used in this type of analysis, the methodology is overwhelmingly quantitative

in nature, with individual nodes, network formations, the prevalence of hyperlinks or forward publishing in the mainstream media being favoured units of analysis. Papacharissi (2007:21) describes blogs as “virtual space where information ignored by main-stream media can be published”. If email has replaced the postcard, although they are not completely analogous (Barlow, 2008:10), in many ways blogs have provided an alternative to the letter home (Jordan, 2013:57), especially in the manner in which Shapiro and Humphreys (2013:1162–1163) describe them, inasmuch as they are often written to communicate with particular individuals, but can be read by a broader audience, often unknown to the author, and allow a connection with those close the author emotionally, but possibly geographically distanced. There has been some attention given to these types of blogs, such as the experiences of Japanese women living with Australian spouses in Australia (Takeda, 2013), or examining online networks of ex-pat Egyptians (Severo & Zuolo, 2012). Recent work in the area of military blogs (Shapiro & Humphreys, 2013), has strong connections with this type of work in migration, where contemporary blogs of US military personnel are compared with written family correspondence of Civil War soldiers. In these cases, both contemporary and historical correspondence served similar purposes: to connect with individuals at home; to provide a means by which news could be shared with a wider community; to provide an outlet for recording and expressing personal experiences. This lends weight to the argument for a qualitative examination of migration blogs as new media, and an examination of the prevalent themes.

While the use of electronic communication, including a range of social media platforms such as blogs, may have made more traditional communication, the letter for example, redundant, they cannot be considered in the same way. The communication of blogs is no longer necessarily between two people, or connected groups of people, but becomes a written discussion in which any individual can be a reader and a participant (Dean, 2010:61–63; Shapiro & Humphreys, 2013:1160; Walker Rettberg, 2008:46–48). They are, in many ways, a conversation of an extended, global community, and are able to be assessed as a conversation (Barlow, 2008:59–83; Thumim, 2012:24–28; Walker Rettberg, 2008:48). For many blogs, the writing also encompasses a complete and conscious lack of objectivity, with contributors posting extremely personal, subjective views on topics or issues (Walker Rettberg, 2008:21).

These types of conversations have been difficult to analyse in the study of the migration experience previously. Contemporary researchers, however, now have access to a greater number of writers than possibly at any other point in history, and this is likely to grow (Walker Rettberg, 2008:155). New-media, versus old-media, differs in one significant respect: the producer has control over new-media in a way that has not happened before. In the past, if an individual wrote a letter to someone and posted it, it was the receiver, or recipient who decided if that letter was to be saved for the permanent record, or disposed of, and if it was kept, whether access would be granted to a third party. Popular media such as newspapers, then as now, decide what is published and in what way. For those recording their experiences through

blogs, and other social media, it is the writer who decides who reads this — open or closed source — how long it is kept, the criteria under which others can contribute to the story, and so on. Unless a platform is removed, or there is external intervention, it is the blogger who decides when their posts are removed from the record. At the same time, unless restricted or moderated, the author may be unaware of her/his readership.

The nature of posting online can also be seen to be different to old-media. It is often immediate, and often written without reflection. As such, it seems that it may be easier to trace the way those who post, in this case migrants, change their attitude and approach to migration as a whole, as well as particular elements of the migration experience, and how they interact with other migrants and potential-migrants. As bloggers can post regularly, and in a way that records their thoughts and feelings at a particular point in time, and the tracing this development over time is one theme that needs to be addressed, so as to understand how the contemporary migrant develops in her or his attitude towards the experience over time.

## **Blogs and their analysis**

As has just been described, this research seeks to examine blogging as a research resource, in this case specifically in the area of migration, by examining individual authors, rather than large, centrally-administered, journalistic blogs. Blogs have been selected for this project rather than other types of common social media, such as Facebook or Twitter. The main consideration for selecting blogs alone is that these types of postings are usually open source. Unlike Twitter, and in particular Facebook, there is no restriction on who reads posts, i.e. there is no permission seeking (e.g. becoming a “friend” on Facebook), or signing up to individual feeds (e.g. “following” someone on Twitter). Even with forum style blogs, one of which will be described below, a reader may need to create an account with the blog, but once they have done that are free to read what they wish, and contribute, or not, to conversations discussed online. In this format, writers are aware that they are writing for a broader audience than those known to them, and report the details of their migration experience for this audience. It is because of this that blogs alone have been the focus of this research. As noted above, much of the previous research done with bloggers has been largely quantitative, measuring users, networks etc. With a few exceptions (for example Shaprio & Humphreys, 2013; Takeda, 2013), there has been less focus on blog content, or research done in a qualitative framework. As this research seeks to form an understanding of the contemporary Greek migrant’s experience, and the ways in which it is communicated through new-media, a qualitative method was selected. Using a common search-engine, searches were done, regularly over a period of six months, to locate bloggers from Greece writing about their migration experience. Five sites were identified as being legitimate sites (i.e. not parody, or political sites), four of which were privately written, and one forum site, which are described below. These

sites were then examined to ascertain the themes covered in their writing, including how the blogger perceived her/his adopted country, reflections and/or nostalgia for Greece, and practical elements of migration, such as costs, accommodation, employment and bureaucracy.

## Contemporary Migration Blogs Examined

With the evolution of blogging, there are a number of individuals uploading and/or blogging about migration, with some publishing more frequently than others. There is a variety of themes, writing styles, language utilisation (i.e. Greek, English) and audience specific content. For the purpose of this study, five sites were examined, to demonstrate the varying styles and content. These sites are *Patriotaki* (patriotaki.net), *Immigration to Sydney* (blog.sydneybybyron.com), *Soul Notes* (jsoulnotes.blogspot.com.au), *Χωρίς Τάπερ* (notaper.blogspot.com), and *New Diaspora* (newdiaspora.com). The details of these sites and the themes they are discussing are elaborated on below.

One of the most popular and evolving blogging site amongst Greek migrants is *Patriotaki* (patriotaki.net). This site is produced mostly in Greek, essentially driven and aimed at Greek native speakers. It is forum based, which has multiple members, discussing multiple conversations, or threads. The website differentiates Greek migration to numerous countries, including Canada, Great Britain, America and Australia, with specific threads, covering a range of issues related to migration, such as logistical issues prior to travelling, cost of living, job opportunities, social services, everyday life etc.<sup>7</sup> It is evident from the forum's postings that individuals express a detailed and

<sup>7</sup> One of the bloggers comments on the expensive nature of living giving a detailed list of products and prices:

Τιμές από διάφορα προϊόντα των Σούπερ Μάρκετ κ άλλων μαγαζιών στην Αδελαΐδα.

Ψωμί από 3.5 – 5.20 \$ το καρβέλι

Κορν Φλέικς 3 \$ τα 800 γραμμάρια κ ανεβαίνει

Καφές Ελληνικός 9 \$ τα 500 gr

Νες Καφές Blend 43\* 8.59 \$ τα 100 γραμμάρια

Ελιές Καλαμών 20 \$ το κιλό

Φέτα Ελληνική 20 \$ το κιλό

Φέτα Δωδώνης 24 \$ το κιλό

Λάδι Ισπανίας 9 \$ τα 2 λίτρα

Λάδι Αργολίδος 20 \$ τα 4 λίτρα

([http://www.patriotaki.net/showthread.php?p=60102/\\_pdf/gre.pdf](http://www.patriotaki.net/showthread.php?p=60102/_pdf/gre.pdf))

The same blogger talks about the initial difficulties of finding a suitable rental property: “Το επόμενο κ πιο βασικό βήμα ήταν να βρούμε γρήγορα σπίτι, όμως παρ’ όλο το ψάξιμο δεν μπορέσαμε να βρούμε κάτι φθηνό [...]. Μια μέρα πήγαμε σε ένα κ ο μεσίτης (agent) μας ζήτησε 275 \$ την εβδομάδα αλλά 6 μήνες προκαταβολή και ντεπόζιτ σύνολο 8.300 \$ κ το κλειδί στο χέρι. [...] Γενικά ο κάθε ένας ζητάει ότι θέλει κ οι διαφορές είναι τεράστιες στην αγορά για όλα τα πράγματα κ εδώ πρέπει να έχεις για αρχή κάποιον συγγενή ή φίλο να μείνεις, λεφτά \$\$\$\$\$, χρόνο..., να μιλάς την γλώσσα κ να έχεις κ αυτοκίνητο γιατί κ οι αποστάσεις είναι μεγάλες κ τα καθημερινά έξοδα ειδικά αν έχεις κ οικογένεια ακόμη πιο μεγάλα κ πάγια φυσικά...!!!” ([http://www.patriotaki.net/showthread.php?p=60102/\\_pdf/gre.pdf](http://www.patriotaki.net/showthread.php?p=60102/_pdf/gre.pdf)).

Note: We follow the spelling and grammar of the original text.



diverse range of experiences and give necessary advice to potential migrants. Some of the advice is generic and aims at migrants' expectations for their new life:

Πριν πάρεις μια βαλίτσα κ ξεκινήσεις «για οπουδήποτε εκτός Ελλάδας» διασταύρωσε όλες τις πληροφορίες, αξιολόγησε τα προσόντα σου, τα οικονομικά σου κ αφού έχεις τις απαιτούμενες δυνατότητες τότε κάτσε κ σκέψου μέχρι τι είσαι ικανός να αντέξεις για να πετύχεις τον στόχο σου...!!! Με λίγα λόγια ποντάρισε μόνο σε σένα κ ότι επιπλέον βοήθεια έρθει καλοδεχούμενη. (<http://www.patriotaki.net/ανταπόκριση-απο-την-αυστραλία-76/ανταπόκριση-jimathens-4309/index27.html>)

Bloggers using *Patriotaki* tend to also address migration themes and elaborate on questions posted by others; many a conversation is often shared between Greek migrants in Australia, and those thinking about migrating from Greece. As an indicative example of such an exchange of information is the following question of a potential migrant:

Καλημερα σε ολους σας ....απο Αθηνα που χιονιζει..ηθελα τα φωτα σας...κ σας ευχαριστω εκ των προτερων...Ο πατερας μου πεθανε πριν 2χρονια δυστυχως..Αυστραλος υπηκοος απο το 1984 με το πιστοποιητικο, το διαβατηριο κ την αδεια οδηγησης της Αυστραλιας να τα εχω σπιτι μου..σκεφτηκα κ εγω μηπως μπορω να παρω την υπηκοοτητα κ να φυγω μπας κ βρουμε ενα λιγο καλυτερο αυριο...πηγα στην πρεσβεια κ μου ειπαν οτι επειδη δεν ειναι εν ζωη δεν ξερουν αν γινεται κ με παρεπεμψαν στην πρεσβεια στο Λονδινο..Απο αυτα που διαβασα Κ ΑΝ καταλαβα καλα δεν την δικαιουμαι γιατι γεννηθηκα το1975 ...πριν δηλ βγαλει υπηκοοτητα ο πατερας μου...μηπως γνωριζει καποιος για το θεμα? (<http://www.patriotaki.net/ερωτησεις-σχετικά-με-την-μετανάστευση-στην-αυστραλία-74/ερωτησεις-σχετικά-με-την-μετανάστευση-στην-αυστραλία-xxi-5852/index17.html>)<sup>8</sup>

Many members gladly reply either with short or detailed answers. One of the replies is the following:

Αν οταν γεννηθηκες εσυ, στην Ελλαδα, δεν ειχε την Αυστραλιανη υπηκοοτητα ο πατερας σου...ξεχνα το...Δεν υπαρχει περιπτωση να παρεις citizenship by descent...

'A child born overseas can be registered as an Australian citizen by descent if at least one of the parents is an Australian citizen at the time of the child's birth.' [...] υπηρξε και άλλη παρομοια με σενα περιπτωση, μελους του patriotaki...Που οταν γεννηθηκε Ελλαδα, ο πατερας του, δεν ειχε παρει ακομα, την Αυστραλιανη υπηκοοτητα...Και τον απερριψαν, απ το Λονδινο ...Τί να πω...Απορω, που λες, οτι απ την πρεσβεια, σου ειπαν οτι το θεμα, ειναι οτι δεν ειναι εν ζωη... Πώς θα μπορούσε να σου 'περασει', κατι που δεν ειχε την στιγμη που γεννηθηκες;...Το οτι πηγαινε και ερχοταν στην Αυστραλια, δεν σημαινει, κατι... Αφου δεν ειχε την υπηκοοτητα, οταν γεννηθηκες... Θα μετρουσε, μονο αν ηταν Αυστραλος υπηκοος οταν γεννηθηκες στην Ελλαδα, στην περιπτωση που ειχε κι αυτος υπηκοοτητα by descent και θα πρεπε να δειξει, οτι ειχε ζησει συνολικα, δυο χρονια στην Αυστραλια, για να μπορεσει να σου περασει

<sup>8</sup> We follow the spelling and grammar of the original text.

και σενα την υπηκοοτητα by descent... (<http://www.patriotaki.net/ερωτήσεις-σχετικά-με-την-μετανάστευση-στην-αυστραλία-74/ερωτήσεις-σχετικά-με-την-μετανάστευση-στην-αυστραλία-xxi-5852/index17.html>)<sup>9</sup>

*Immigration to Sydney* (blog.sydneybybyron.com) has been actively posting since 2009. This blog site does not specify if it has a single or multiple authors, but does welcome guest authors to post on the site. It is written in English, and covers a range of migration issues with uncensored thoughts. Although not specific to Greek migrants, it has covered Greece/Greek specific issues, possibly the result of post-crisis Greek migration.<sup>10</sup> The website recently updated and reformatted the site, introducing a new forum section, similar to *Patriotaki*, where multiple threads can be contributed to by readers. Also, it now provides five main sub-headings, which one can navigate through the site, which are: “Best places to live in Sydney”, “Leaving Australia?” (sic), “Schooling in Sydney Australia”, “Happy/unhappy/issues in Australia”, and “Australian visas” (*Immigration to Sydney*, 2014).

*SoulNotes* (jsoulnotes.blogspot.com.au) is created by a writer by the name j.Silver (sic), who is an individual, male blogger. *SoulNotes* is written in Greek, however this blogger posts infrequently. He covers a range of mainly pre-migration issues in coming to Australia with his wife, with interesting metaphorical and philosophical expressionism. For example, one of his blogs in 2011, started with <<Μεταναστεύω, άρα υπάρχω...>>, or “I migrate, therefore I am...” (*SoulNotes*, 2011). The blogger discusses migration to Australia as a once in a lifetime opportunity, and that Greece has become a somewhere one cannot seek a future or life. He believes his wife’s [job] posting to Australia came at the right time, and is enthusiastic and excited about the “adventure” they will take (*SoulNotes*, 2011). Also, the blogger discusses detailed personal emotions, in a reflective style, and writes to a specific audience, illustrated by the sign off: <<Θα μας λειψετε...>>, in another words “You will be missed...☺” (*SoulNotes*, 2011).

*Χωρίς Τάπερ* (notaper.blogspot.com), meaning “Without Tupperware”, is an individual female blogger, who writes in Greek discussing life in South Australia and her personal experience as a migrant.<sup>11</sup> The author began blogging in 2012 just before

<sup>9</sup> We follow the spelling and grammar of the original text.

<sup>10</sup> One of the blogs which concerns Greek migrants is the following: “Greeks moving and immigrating to Australia. If you are from Greece or Greek and thinking of moving to Australia at some point, I have some good news! I was plugging away on the internet when I came across a number of resources claiming that the city of Melbourne, Australia has the largest Greek population outside of Greece! Good news indeed for anyone leaving their home country as this means there will probably be a lot of Greek shops Café’s, restaurants etc in Australia. There is nothing worse than immigrating to another country and no having anything of home there with you. I know we often move to get away from our countries, but believe me there will come a time when you miss your home country” (*Immigration to Sydney*, 4 January 2014).

Another interesting blog also focuses on “Issues that Greek speaking people face in Australia” (*Immigration to Sydney*, 4 January 2014).

<sup>11</sup> The blogger provides the following description of herself on the cover page of the blog: “Έχω βέσπα, πίνω μπύρες, πάω στο γήπεδο και κάνω Ph.D στην Αυστραλία (Χωρίς τάπερ).

leaving Greece. Initially, there were frequent posts but over time these have decreased, for example in 2012 she posted 16 times, 2013 she posted 12 times, and in 2014 she posted 2 times. The style of writing reveals difficult aspects of migration to Australia,<sup>12</sup> and also has a specific audience in mind.

*New Diaspora* (newdiaspora.com) started in 2013 and differs to the sites already discussed, which are forum and personal blog sites, as this represents a weblog and web documentary format. Illustrating globalisation and migration, it is a movement focussed on giving voice to Greek expatriates who reside around the world. The website is in both Greek and English, and describes itself as “An open letter with multiple senders and even more recipients, focusing on the personal stories of Greeks who decided to move abroad” (*New Diaspora*, 2015).<sup>13</sup> It mainly focuses on younger professional users, who are living abroad, enticing them to be creative with their skills, and providing resources to become entrepreneurial. Furthermore, *New Diaspora’s* content is presented in various media, such as interviews, videos, articles, open letters, blogging forums, and other third-party portals such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. Overall the website has a different feel and look, and this is illustrated by the evolving types of media utilised to document the migration experience.

## Discussion

The themes identified above illustrate different ways in which migrants wish to document the experience of the trauma of separation from home through their online postings. They are simultaneously practical (e.g. obtaining visas, organising flights, dealing with Australian bureaucracy), emotional (e.g. dealing with homesickness, missing traditional holidays), and fiscal (e.g. the cost of living, finding accommodation, schooling), and can move from one theme to another post-by-post.

<sup>12</sup> “It’s been two years since I left. And I learned to wear summer clothes on February and a jacket on July. And I learned to eat fish fillets because you can’t find anything else. And I learned to watch rugby and cricket. And I learned to drive in the opposite side, to pay a lot for the internet connection and a little for plane tickets. And I learned to survive in 46 degrees and to go swimming on Christmas. And I learned to ‘live’ Greece and her people through skype and facebook. And I learned how to make friends and family again. And I learned to live with strangers and to share the house, the bread and the olive oil. And I learned to love this country but not to forget the one I grew up in. The country that I don’t know in what state it is right now. [...] I’m trying not to feel the nostalgia. Yes, I miss Greece. I miss the people. I miss the food. The atmosphere. The climate. The habit... With most of the people I still keep in touch but it’s not the same. [...] Especially if you are so far away that you can’t even visit home for just a weekend. It’s been two years I’m gone...” (*Χωρίς τάπερ*, 6 Φεβρουαρίου 2014). Note: We follow the spelling and grammar of the original text.

<sup>13</sup> From the home page of *New Diaspora* we read: “*New Diaspora* started out as a digital storytelling platform, focusing on the new generation of Greeks living abroad during the crisis in their homeland. Since then, *New Diaspora* has been gradually evolving into a participatory media channel that records a migration wave as it happens. Its goal is to engage, connect and inspire democratic dialogue and cross-fertilisation of ideas, eventually crystallising the collective pulse of a ‘borderless nation’” (*New Diaspora*).

Taking these themes into considering, examining the content of the blogs and the way in which different bloggers address these themes, there are two broad methods by which the experience of migration is communicated, for example the comparison of how bloggers on the forum site *Patriotaki* communicate their migration experiences, with those writing on individual or personal sites. Although all bloggers are writing for an unknown audience, i.e. the wider blogosphere, the posts on *Patriotaki* are often more practical in nature, than those of individual authors. As an example, the blogger on *Patrotaki* who wishes to illustrate differences in the cost of living produces a list of common household purchases, and their price, with a strong focus on the fiscal implications of migration. In comparison, *Χωρίς Τάπερ* also discusses the difference in prices between Greece and Australia, but does so by comparing Greece and Australia, and that an internet subscription is more expensive in Australia, but an airfare is less expensive. In this case the blogger communicates this as a need to emotionally readjust to life in Australia, and the expectations of living abroad. Although each is done in a different tone, both of these examples illustrate that not only the cost of living in another country, but a nostalgic need to compare with the cost of living in the 'home' country is something that is important to both bloggers. This element can be traced through most of the themes identified above, the need to make comparisons, whether it is migrants posting video blogs on *New Diaspora* on their connection to their homeland in ways that are emotional, or emotive, whereas *Immigration to Sydney* examines good neighbourhoods in which to find Greek food, in a matter of fact manner. Regardless of the way they are communicated, common themes related to the necessity of readjusting to practical and cultural aspects, and the need to seek a new identity as a Greek living away from Greece, dominate many of these posts.

These themes also illustrate that when considering how these blogs should be examined more broadly, it should be commenced by recognising that these posts are inherently separated from old-media communication, and need to be studied as such. Firstly, there is the ephemeral nature of these posts, at risk of disappearing as platforms are discontinued or accounts closed. Yet these types of records are important tools to understanding how contemporary migrants perceive their experience, illustrating what these individuals choose to share with a far broader audience. Overall, blogs differ from traditional written correspondence, such as letters or even emails, because they are available to any person who wishes to log onto a particular site, and may therefore stick to broad, generic themes, with fewer extremely-personal stories or information. Additionally, unlike oral histories, which can be documented years or even decades after migration, blogs are less nostalgic. These themes have illustrated that migrants who record their experiences using blogs often focus on the quotidian, and cover themes such as the precise cost of living, or both the negative and positive elements of interacting with both non-Greek Australians and Greek Australians. At the same time, similar to the discussions illustrated by Shapiro & Humphreys (2013), these blogs can record personal, intimate conversations between the author and

significant others, separated geographically from the author. Bloggers such as *Soul Notes*, or *Χωρίς Τάπερ* cover emotional issues, such as missing family, or adjusting to changes in culture.

Conversely, forum style blogs such as *Patriotaki* illustrate a significant change in the discourse in old-media forms of migration communication, where the writer and the reader have been at separate ends of the correspondence. Using new-media platforms, a dialogue is allowed more so than had previously. Readers are no longer simply receivers, but are able to participate in, and contribute to, blog posts in a way that is markedly different to old-media. This allows for the challenging of details, or preconceptions, and the inclusion of personal recollections, experiences, and facts. From the point of view of migration studies, this illustrates a marked increase in the number of voices available to the researcher. This, in particular, allows migration studies to look at challenges to pre-conceptions or inaccuracies in the migration record — as the singular voice of the correspondent is now awash in a sea of complementary, or contradictory, noise.

## Areas for further research

This preliminary examination of the use of blogging in migration studies has shown the breadth and depth of the records available to researchers. Blogs can be contributed to over significant periods of time, providing scope for longitudinal studies that trace attitudes to migration, the home-land, and the adopted-land over time. Not only this, but posts that remain online can be contributed to, via post or forum, for a significant amount of time after the original post has been written. In this way, the dialogue between writer and reader can be separated not only by distance, but also by time. In terms of assessing the accuracy or inaccuracy of these posts, or individual preferences or prejudices that have contributed to particular posts, there are now additional voices that can be assessed within the narrative. Moving forward, these additions to posts need to be assessed, to determine how they may affect the overall analysis of migration blogs.

This leads to one of the possible limitations of working with some blogs, in particular forum style blogs, in migration studies, and this is the issue of anonymity. The blog is both a blessing and a curse in this matter, for research. On the positive side, analysing a large number of blogs, which are freely available in a public domain, provides the research with access to potentially large amounts of data and information, that can be analysed and cross referenced. In some studies, such as Takeda's work with individual Japanese bloggers (2013), or Shapiro and Humphreys work with a single military blogger (2013), there is some capacity to make an assessment of this individual and the nature of their contribution to the study. When looking at large number of bloggers, many operating anonymously under a nom de plume, there may be difficulties in assessing the background of the blogger, for example the uncertainty of the background of the author of *Immigration to Sydney* discussed

above. This introduces issues regarding reliability when assessing blog content, which can also be extended to those posting comments. A significant number of blogs are written around a particular area of interest, whether that be cooking, vintage cars, migration etc., thus creating a cluster of unofficial experts. This is illustrated here by those with limited time spent in Australia making statements about cost of living, attitudes of locals etc. These blogs certainly provide an indication of perception, but understanding how these potential inaccuracies or misconceptions spread through the blogosphere is work that is still to be done, particularly in a migration context. How these self-proclaimed experts can, and should, be understood by the outsider is another area worthy of examination.

Another important step in the future study of migration and blogging will be to compare themes and conversations in both old- and new-media. A comparative investigation in the themes and content of old media, such as letters and print media, used primarily by previous migration waves, as a form of documentation and communication, and the current use of new-media may assist in understanding how the digital age has impacted on the practical and emotional process of migration, and how themes or issues have developed or changed over the last two centuries, with regard to Greeks leaving their homeland, particularly during times of crisis.

Taking these issues into consideration, this initial work has shown the significant potential of this area of examination. There are a growing number of migrants using new-media, including but not limited to blogging, both to record their migration experience as a cathartic exercise, and also to share information with other migrants and to communicate with family and friends in Greece. This provides significant opportunities, and challenges, for migration studies, as a fuller understanding of contemporary migration and its communication methods is developed.

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