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New Knowledge Comes Home: Highly-Skilled Greek Migrants' Aspirations for, Realities of, and Barriers to Knowledge Transfer

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Abstract

Highly-skilled migrants are seen as the new contributors to development by much contemporary literature. Their governments seem to feel the same. I seek to understand the realities and aspirations of highly-skilled migrants during knowledge transfer and the barriers that they encounter. Empirically, the paper is based on the narratives of 22 highly-skilled Greek migrants living in London. My findings indicate that: (1) knowledge transfer is a potential contributor to development within the migration and development nexus but barriers prevent this positive outcome; (2) experiences and barriers within the migration cycle affect migrants' choices regarding the nature of this contribution. State policy should take into consideration the perceptions of existing barriers to knowledge transfer in order to effectively benefit from it.

Keywords

Highly-skilled migrants, knowledge transfer, Greek migration to the UK, economic crisis

Introduction

Over the last decade, Greece has been one of the countries hardest-hit by the global economic crisis (Labrianidis and Pratsinakis 2016) – a crisis which not only affected Greece economically, but which provoked many political and social changes. One of the major consequences of the crisis – and rarely discussed in-depth – is the increasing and continuous emigration of human capital, especially of the highly skilled. Qualified Greeks from 2008 onwards are seeking employment in other European countries or overseas according to their qualifications and skills (Labrianidis 2014). While both the existing literature on Greek brain drain and the media try to determine the size of this emigration, less attention has been afforded to the experiences of skilled emigrants and their potential contribution to development, ‘back home’ (Cavounidis 2015).

This study seeks to determine how highly-skilled Greek migrants in London transfer knowledge from and to Greece.¹ Drawing on in-depth interviews, I examine the kind of knowledge transferred and how this is effected, the meanings that are attached to this knowledge, and the barriers to knowledge transfer that are subjectively perceived by highly-skilled Greeks in London and their attempts to overcome them. This study also nuances the boundaries and limitations of knowledge transfer, determines how it is gained, and how it could or does contribute to development in the migrants' country of origin.

The dual research question ‘How do highly-skilled Greek migrants in London transfer their skills and what are the barriers to this knowledge transfer?’ will help me to explore the various practices, aspirations and boundaries to knowledge transfer. This approach will assist in building a theoretically nuanced understanding of knowledge transfer as a contributor to development for the country of origin. The problematic focuses around how these migrants have transferred knowledge from Greece to the UK, within the UK and – as a final part of this circular movement – back to Greece.

¹ This paper is a revised and edited version of my MA dissertation in Migration Studies at Sussex. It was carried out within the frame of the Horizon 2020 project on New European Youth Mobilities (YMOBILITY) based at Sussex and coordinated by Prof. Russell King. Since Greeks were not one of the sampled groups in YMOBILITY (which were Italians, Spaniards, Romanians, Slovaks, Latvians and Irish), this dissertation-based study contributed a useful adjunct to the main project, whose interview schedule I was able to use and adapt.

This study develops a typology of knowledge transfer and of barriers met or imagined by skilled Greek emigrants in London through their narratives and perceptions. A typology of barriers gives a better understanding of them; it might help state policies to overcome them, enabling the knowledge transfer to be fully achievable.

In terms of research design and epistemology, I followed a qualitative research cycle which consists of three interlinked stages: design, analytic and ethnographic (Hennink *et al.* 2011). These interpreting cycles helped me to read the theory, then my data, followed again by theory and data, and to be able to compare inductive findings with the original conceptual framework of the study to contribute to new concepts or explanations to existing theory (Hennink *et al.* 2011).

In order to answer my research question, this paper first provides a brief summary of current emigration flows in Greece. The subsequent section explores key concepts in the literature on social remittances and knowledge transfer and reviews current discourses within the development and migration nexus. An overview of the theoretical framework guiding this research is then provided which incorporates key considerations for Greek brain drain and knowledge transfer. Next, I describe my methodology, which prepares the field for the three central sections of the dissertation that are based on analysis of knowledge transfer in the migration cycle, and which are organised into three thematic sequences: from the sending to the receiving country, within the receiving country, and then back to the sending one. These sections all focus on my analysis of the data collected from 22 in-depth interviews with highly-skilled Greeks in London. The analysis is based on the geographical transfer of social, cultural, political and economic remittances and on the perceived aspirations for and barriers to this transfer.

It is worth studying this topic because migrants transfer not only economic, but also social remittances (Levitt 1998; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2011). Through these remittances, knowledge and skills can travel, take on meaning and contribute to a country's development. For that reason, I argue that there are distinct types of knowledge transferred in different geographical intersections, and that barriers to those transfers exist. It is interesting to distinguish and analyse these barriers to determine whether they are sectoral or general.

Another interesting aspect of this research is how the migrant individuals see themselves during these transfers and to what degree they aspire to overcome these barriers. Thus, what this study attempts is to defend the view that knowledge is transferred through, and by, highly-skilled migrants and that it is worth being developed; however barriers are present, and they too should be studied in order to improve state policies on these transfers.

Background – Greek migration and brain drain

Historically Greece was an emigration country with two main outflows, the first during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and the second following the Second World War. However, from the early 1970s Greece became a favourable destination for immigration. The peak period of this trend was during the 1990s, when Greece was receiving flows from co-ethnics and migrants due to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc. Migrants from post-Soviet countries entered Greece searching for a better life away from their countries' political and economic instability (Karamanidou 2015). Immigration waves arrived in Greece from Albania (the principal source) and from several other countries such as Ukraine, Russia, Georgia, Bulgaria and Poland (Triandafyllidou 2009). And in the 2000s, and especially in 2015 and early 2016, Greece turned into 'Europe's entrance gate' for

international migrants and refugees from conflict areas (Maroukis 2010; Papadopoulou-Kourkoula 2008).

At the dawn of the 21st century, Greece also became a transit country, and experienced remarkable arrivals not only continuing from the above countries, but also from South Asia, mainly from Pakistan and Bangladesh, and from sub-Saharan Africa (Triandafyllidou 2009). It became an asylum-seeking country for refugees from unstable areas, notably Iraq, Somalia, Eritrea and Afghanistan. However, only in 2015 did the country attract a lot of global media attention for the arrival to Europe through Greece of around 857,000 refugee-migrants, many of them fleeing the crisis in Syria (IOM 2015).

Whilst Greece is currently considered as a ‘storage-house’ for unwanted immigrants in Europe (Labrianidis and Pratsinakis 2016), the emigration of Greek nationals since 2008 is becoming an increasingly worrisome phenomenon of Greek reality. Economic recession, austerity, social and political changes are just some of the consequences of the 2008 crisis and its aftermath. Young skilled Greeks have left, escaping the society’s misery, the state’s corruption, and seeking to find employment according their qualifications; since Greece’s unemployment rate reached around 25% (CIA 2015).

Figures for the exact size of the recent Greek emigration are uncertain. EUROSTAT (2016) data shows that 1,208,864 Greek citizens left the country between 2010 and 2013. However, as Labrianidis and Pratsinakis (2016) note, EUROSTAT changed several times the statistics on Greek emigration. More conservatively, the Bank of Greece (2016) estimates that about 223,000 young skilled Greeks left permanently the country during this period. According to a study on highly-skilled labour force and the current economic crisis by Labrianidis and Vogiatzis, notable were the high rates of highly educated young who emigrated. These authors concluded that ‘Greece has lost a significant part of an extremely dynamic asset, which is high educated human capital’ (2013a: 475; also 2013b).

More than a half of these recent outflows went to the UK and Germany, with many skilled migrants heading to London, the most favourable destination for Greek professionals. It is a global centre of finance, lifestyle and culture. Young Europeans imagine it as a place to earn money, improve their careers, have a different lifestyle and enjoy a rich social and cultural life (King *et al.* 2014).

Beyond the actual existence this brain drain, little is known about the individuals’ experiences and aspirations on knowledge transfer back home. Their new skills and mind-set could transform them to ‘change agents’; in other words, to contributors for Greece’s development. According to Faist (2008), young highly-skilled migrants see themselves as agents of economic and social change, and they are seen as agents of change by their home country’s government. For that reason, this paper examines this possibility and reveals what kind of knowledge is transferable and how; the boundaries that can prevent this from happening; and how individuals perceived these barriers and strategise to overcome them.

Conceptual framework

Knowledge transfer is defined for the purposes of this research as the knowledge and skills that travel back to the sending countries through different ways, as migrants are attached to their homelands and wish to be part of its development (Siar 2011); it is similar, but by no means identical, to the broad term of social remittances. This connection between the migrants and their home countries potentially transforms ‘brain drain’ into ‘brain gain’ and might open up new prospects for development. Highly-

skilled migration has, in the past, been seen as a loss for sending countries; however this is not necessarily the case today.

The literature on the migration and development nexus, which has for some time been at the centre of attention of research on development policies, has frequently expressed the positive effects of migration in development (Bakewell 2008). As Skeldon (2008: 7) argues, this nexus focuses on ‘three major interconnected themes: remittances; skilled migration and brain drain; and diaspora’. Remittances, in particular, have been labelled a ‘mantra’ of development (Kapur 2003). However, most debates about the development and migration nexus focus on *economic* rather than *social* remittances. In addition, in the Greek case the economic remittances are nowadays very few. According to the World Bank (2016), there was a virtual halving in personal remittances received between 2013 – US \$804 million, and 2015 – US \$428 million. Before the crisis, remittances received were around US \$1.8 billion in the 1990s; during the first years of the 2000s this increased to US \$2.2 billion. On the eve of the crisis remittances amounted to about US \$2.5 billion, which was then followed by a rapid decrease. For that reason, this paper moves beyond monetary remittances and focuses particularly on knowledge transfer and skilled human capital.

Several studies have investigated the concept of knowledge transfer, in particular those involving the Latvian, Indian, Chinese and South African diasporas (Brown 2003; King *et al.* 2016a; Saxenian 2002; Xiang 2005). However, these studies do not seem to consider these flows of knowledge within the migration cycle. Most of the studies on knowledge transfer focus mainly on migrants in their destination countries (Williams 2007) or on their potential for return (King *et al.* 2016a). This paper aims, therefore, to fill this notable gap by emphasising the importance of looking at the full migration cycle in order to nuance and achieve a better and more comprehensive understanding of the impacts of knowledge transfer, both on individuals and on development in the sending country, together with the barriers perceived to prevent it. Hence, it is essential to understand the fact that knowledge moves at all stages of the migration cycle and that migrants are carrying it, changing it, enriching it and then remitting it home.

Furthermore, I agree with the view of King *et al.* (2016a) on seeing knowledge transfer as part of the concept of social remittances. The existing literature recognises the critical role played by social remittances in development (Faist 2008). Levitt (1998, 2001) argues that social remittances impact the normative structures of ideas, values and beliefs. King *et al.* (2016a) include in social remittances the involvement of social and human capital, in addition to systems of practice – which refer to the different paths of the normative structure of acts and behaviours. For that reason and following an interpretive cycle, this study attempts to examine this concept through the lens of social capital behaviour and perceptions.

Conceptual definitions

The emigration of highly-skilled youth is a major theme throughout the literature on Greek brain drain in the last few years. However, little attention has been paid to the more specialised topic of knowledge transfer.

Most research approaches the phenomenon of emigration by looking at its size, main trends and dynamics, preferred destinations and, more recently, the prospect of return (see Christopoulos *et al.* 2014; Labrianidis and Vogiatzis 2013a, 2013b; Labrianidis 2014; Labrianidis and Sykas 2015; Labrianidis and Pratsinakis 2016). That said, studies which do mention the development of

transnational economic ties between Greece and its skilled migrants (Labrianidis and Pratsinakis 2016) often gloss over the importance of knowledge transfer and the barriers to diasporas' and individuals' willingness to contribute to development in the home country.

Additionally, a substantial amount of literature examines the motivations behind and characteristics of skilled, unskilled and students' mobilities within Europe and their subsequent integration via case studies from diverse European countries (e.g. Kennedy 2008; King *et al.* 2014): however, again, very little is discussed on knowledge transfer. Furthermore, studies of the migration and development nexus have mainly examined the importance of skills rather than knowledge (Williams 2006, 2007) – another gap that I hope to fill here.

Summarising the conceptual tools guiding this study, based on Williams' (2006, 2007) conceptualisation of types of knowledge transfer, I use the following terms – embrained, embodied, encultured and embedded. According to Williams (2007: 364), 'embrained knowledge is dependent on conceptual skills and cognitive abilities, which allow recognition of underlying patterns, and reflection on these'. On the other hand he defines (2007: 364) embodied knowledge to be a result of the experience of physical presence. 'This is practical thinking rooted in specific contexts, physical presence, sentient and sensory information, and learning in doing'. It is said that these two types of knowledge transfer are fully achievable; however their transfer within the migration cycle varies. Additionally 'encultured' refers to the knowledge of shared meanings, and 'embedded' applies to different language systems and work cultures (King *et al.* 2016a; Williams 2006). In my analysis these latter two types of knowledge are less relevant than the first two.

Typologies throughout the migration cycle

Developing a typology is a multi-step process as it involves an examination of the existing literature on barriers to knowledge transfer (King *et al.* 2016a; Williams 2007), an analysis of interviews with skilled Greeks, and a review of the main patterns and concepts identified (Hennink *et al.* 2011). For the purpose of contributing to a better understanding of the importance of knowledge transfer to development, this typology builds upon previous mappings of barriers (Williams 2007) and introduces a conceptual framework within which to understand the experiences of highly skilled migrants who are aspiring, trying, or not succeeding to transfer knowledge and skills to their homeland. Given the scope and the aim of this study, this typology only focuses on the experiences of highly-skilled Greek migrants within the Greater London area.

I categorise the barriers to knowledge transfer in the migration cycle as follows: cultural – which includes linguistic boundaries as well; mentality-related because, through the interviews, it was notable how the 'Greek mentality' was expressed by the interviewees as an actual or perceived barrier; economic, which played a significant role although it was not considered as the biggest obstacle; and political – the boundaries of which were very sketchy and not clearly stated.

In the final part of my analysis, I offer a typology of my informants in the process of knowledge transfer to the sending country in order to gain a clearer structure and better understanding of experiences, aspirations and denials to contribute to development. I call the *transporters* those who experienced knowledge transfer to Greece and overcame the barriers perceived; the *dreamers* those who aspire to transfer and what potential boundaries they imagine; and as a final category the *denialists*, who were very few in number – however I feel that it is still important to analyse those who will not retain ties and make knowledge transfers because the barriers experienced are more apparent.

Overall, this study moves beyond the aspiration to return. I examine the potential for knowledge transfer and the barriers met along the way. I attempt to fill a gap in the literature on knowledge transfer by adding the idea of experimentation and the connection between knowledge transfer and aspirations. I define experimentation as the attempts of migrants in the receiving country to transfer knowledge back home without risking their position and trying to find more effective ways of transferring. In addition, since the current literature on aspirations focuses partially on the likelihood of emigration (Carling 2014) or of return (Senyurekli and Menjívar 2012), I examine the potential for contributing to development by transferring knowledge either through return or through non-return via diaspora mobilisation.

Methods and data

This study draws on a qualitative research method in order to determine how highly-skilled Greeks in London transfer their knowledge from Greece to the UK, develop new skills within the UK and transfer them back to Greece. My primary research was based on 22 in-depth interviews with young Greek professionals who were living and working in the London area. The target population was composed of those who had completed at least a bachelor's degree and were currently either working in a position corresponding to their qualifications and skills or following an academic career. The sample included both those who had studied in Greece and those who had studied abroad for their higher education, including those who had done both. The length of their stay in the UK varied from 6 months to 10 years. The target population definition was kept deliberately broad in order to capture the variety of experiences of young highly-skilled Greeks with an age range from 25 to 41 years at the time of interview, in June 2016.

Interviews were conducted either face-to-face in London or via Skype and lasted one hour on average. They were carried out in the interviewee's mother tongue – Greek – and were carried out and recorded subject to informed consent. Interviewees were initially recruited from personal contacts and the sample then expanded by a snowballing method. The sample was gender-balanced: 12 females and 10 males. Informants all were highly educated, from bachelor's degrees up to PhDs.

The interviews were loosely structured around qualitative biographical data from the participants, who were encouraged to share their stories in a chronological sequence: their educational background and their life before emigration; their experiences of working and studying abroad; how easily they transferred and applied their knowledge in the UK; where they met difficulties; how they developed new skills in the UK and any barriers they encountered; and – as a final step – how they aspired to transfer or had already transferred knowledge back home.

A key purpose of the interviews was to elicit my respondents' own perceptions of the barriers to and potential for transferring something to Greece and to contribute to development. During the interviews, I did not use the terms *knowledge transfer*, *transfer of skills*, *embrained* or *embodied knowledge*, etc., but I found that interviewees' narratives, based on their experiences and perceptions, could be framed within this conceptual terminology (King *et al.* 2016a).

From Greece to the UK: imaginations, realities and boundaries of knowledge transfer

Taking the various typologies described earlier into consideration, the following sections of this paper summarise the findings from the 22 in-depth interviews with Greek professionals. Overall trends show

knowledge transfer to be an apparent contributor to development. However, many barriers are perceived during these transfer processes. Knowledge transfer is conditioned by issues of education and career prospects, perceptions and claims of self-development and new knowledge and skills, and social or professional connections with Greece.

In this first empirical part, I set out my informants' experiences, imaginations and motivations before migrating as they perceived them at the stage of moving from Greece to the UK. It is important to discuss their experiences, because it strongly affects what they do currently in the receiving country; how they obtained and developed new knowledge and skills (the subject of the next empirical part following this one); and the most relevant information from the informants' experiences and aspirations of knowledge transfer to Greece and the barriers to it (the topic of the final empirical section).

How and where did they gain their education?

The participants shared many perceptions of their life before emigration – at the stage of earning an education in Greece. According to King *et al.* (2016a) the school/university-to-work transition is mainly based on internal mobility rather than international. Hence, very few people move abroad upon reaching their majority (18 years old) – most of my participants moved abroad around their mid-20s to continue in higher education or for work experience. Indeed, the vast majority of my informants studied at least their first degree in a Greek university and had some work experience in one or other sector there. The main reason for deciding to emigrate was often the unsatisfactory nature of their work experience, such as low pay, precarious conditions and jobs which did not match their qualifications.

Additionally, some others left immediately after their first degree, to obtain a master's degree in the UK. Only 3 out of the 22 in my sample started their university studies in the UK after studying in a Greek private college. They decided with their parents to study abroad directly due to their dissatisfaction with the Greek educational system. They sat the exams of the International Baccalaureate (IB), which gives the opportunity to students from around the globe to participate and study at high-standard universities.

Overall, the underlying pattern in terms of characterising the quality of the Greek education was positive. Respondents often expressed their thoughts about the Greek university as a place where you can access broad and rich knowledge on general topics. Easy-to-learn soft skills, however, were irrelevant for the labour market that they were interested in. The first set of quotes below illustrates the trust and satisfaction of the knowledge gained in Greece.²

I am very satisfied with the knowledge and the technical skills I received from the Greek university. My degree gave me all the qualifications needed to work properly in the UK (Petros, 27, teacher).

Furthermore, all the respondents who studied at polytechnics or medical schools were more than content with the knowledge and skills they gained in their first degree, or even in a PhD. Thus, the *embrained* knowledge – as already explained, the cognitive abilities inculcated and enhanced through formal education (Williams 2006, 2007) – is fully transferable and easily applied to the receiving country.

² All informants are given pseudonyms.

I was better in terms of general knowledge in my MSc [in England] than the average of the class. In Greece I learnt to think how to solve a problem. I gained many technical skills and a lot of valuable knowledge in Greece. The quality of knowledge there is higher. To be honest I feel overqualified here. I have an MSc which is equal to my bachelor from Greece. Meaning, my bachelor was five years and it has 300 ECTS, in contrast a three-years bachelor here has got around 180 ECTS and a four years around 200-240 ECTS. That's why I feel that we have higher education in comparison with the average of here. Of course there are exceptions in both sides... But this is my opinion. (Vasilis, 28, civil engineer).

However, comments were notable about the lack of organisation, bad administration and insecurity of the academic programmes in Greece due to student occupations and strikes – a common phenomenon in the last 10 years in Greek universities, because of political instability and constant changes in the educational system.

My best friend lost a year of her studies due to a student occupation at the Economic University of Athens. It is tragic... (Maria, 25, manager in marketing).

And there were a few informants who were totally dissatisfied with the education received in a Greek university. They felt that they had not gained any soft skills. They claimed that some of their knowledge came through practice and work experience or studying by themselves.

It was a five-year waste of time. I haven't learnt much, unfortunately. The only useful knowledge I've gained (in Greece) was during my volunteer work (Athina, 28, forensic mental health practitioner).

Additionally, the group of people who studied for their BA or BSc in the UK were satisfied in relation to job opportunities available. Careers fairs and the organisation of the English universities helped them greatly to understand the English mentality towards transitioning to a suitable job. I noticed that their decision to study abroad was made with their parents.

My parents studied abroad as well. They were always pushing me to do the same at least. I didn't even have to think if I will study in Greece and where. It was sure that I was going for the IB. And I am not regretting it (Maria, 25, junior manager in marketing).

In sum, the most important finding in this section was that *embrained knowledge* might be transferable, depending on the domain of education and employment of the participants. The main meaning they attached to it was the satisfaction of knowledge gained in Greece, with few exceptions. However, they also highlighted their soft and broader knowledge; though a salient point was the lack of specialisation within their sectors – a cultural obstacle for future knowledge transfer within the migration cycle.

Barriers to the transfer of skills from Greece to the UK and finding employment corresponding to qualifications.

Those in my sample who had studied and had some work experience in Greece were very judgemental about the Greek state and system. The increase in unemployment, the employers' unprofessionalism and the difficulty of finding a job in their field were some of their main concerns. The vast majority of them had accepted jobs not related to their studies, such as working in cafés, restaurants or retail outlets. Others had the opportunity to work in their field unpaid, such as on internships, or volunteering for NGOs and other institutions.

This pattern is known as 'brain waste', which refers to the incorporation of skilled human capital in occupations that might not correspond to the skills, qualifications or experience of the qualified individual (Lozano-Ascencio and Gandini 2012). This may occur when professionals work in jobs that are below their educational levels (Mattoo *et al.* 2005; Ozden 2005). It is described as one of the negative outcomes of skilled migration (Faist 2008). However, here there is brain waste *within the sending country* and it is experienced as a push factor for emigration – it prompts the desire to move abroad. The set of quotes below illustrates this phenomenon.

After my graduation from university [in Greece], I returned to my hometown and I was working as a waitress. What else could I do there? It wasn't my dream. I couldn't stand this situation anymore and I decided to leave (Vasiliki, 25, teacher).

I worked in sales for three years during studying for my degree in education. I was very unsatisfied with the working environment and the wage. I knew that it was very difficult to find a job in my sector. I didn't have any prospects to find a job in Greece related to my degree (Petros, 27, teacher).

Even though finding a job in Greece played a push-factor role, all the participants highlighted the struggle to find employment corresponding to their qualifications in the UK. They even struggled sometimes because they were overqualified for job vacancies. It took them approximately three to six months to find a job related to their profile. The biggest barrier they met was their lack of experience in the UK. Employers were rejecting them because they did not have work experience within the British system. This happens when skills are not everywhere considered the same: the syndrome of 'non-recognition of home-acquired skills' (King *et al.* 2016b: 11).

At the same time, the jobseekers faced linguistic barriers, especially with professional terminology. Not all professions have a globally common terminology. This factor can play a significant role in the adaptation and integration of individuals in the working environment in the receiving country. Accompanied with that was another barrier, the lack of understanding of the working and job-seeking process. Even those who came to do a bachelor's or a master's struggled a bit to enter the labour market. Mentality-wise, language issues and lack of experience in England were the major patterns mentioned by the respondents.

I met practical difficulties with language because I am thinking more in Greek, also with special terms, and the system of mental health in the UK; which I had been taught during my training here, but it was very theoretical and did not help me after

all to adapt in my profession. For that reason I had to study on my own again and learn all the terminologies while working to become a more productive employee (Athina, 28, forensic mental health practitioner).

These cultural and linguistic barriers affected interviewees' integration and effectiveness at work. A potential explanation for this difficulty might be the relationship between the time elapsed since the arrival of these skilled migrants in the UK and the likely use of their abilities (King *et al.* 2014). This concept demonstrates that the transfer of migrants' skills is not perfect when individuals move from one place to another (Jasso *et al.* 2002).

It is clear that, in the stage of transferring skills from Greece to the UK, the difficulties are often due to migrants' limited linguistic skills and experience. As Jasso *et al.* (2002) claim in their study, this weak transferability of skills has been observed in many different aspects – in language skills, in labour market skills acquired before migration, in the qualifications achieved in the different educational systems, in the lack of job contacts, and in the non-familiarity of the qualified immigrants with the working practices of the host country.

I applied for many jobs through the NHS. My degree was recognised by the British system and I could apply for any job in the public sector. Only two or three [employers] called me for an interview. They told me that they were satisfied with the interview, however my lack of experience in the British medical sector was problematic. They advised me to gain experience for about two years somewhere else in England and then apply again (Kostas, 41, GP in the private sector).

It is not easy to find a job in the UK. The working system here comes in contrast with the Greek who is coming here and he is looking for employment. I finished my first master and I had over 60 job rejections. I think it is good to come to the UK at an undergraduate level. Do some internships during your studies and then it is easier to find a job related to your qualifications. Coming here for a master, as I did, it is more difficult to adjust, because you don't have enough time to do these things. For that reason, I did a second master. I did an internship during this master which ended up as a job offer. I have worked there for four years after my internship (Spyros, 26, risk management in a bank).

Overall, before migration the participants saw knowledge transfer from Greece to England as an easy process. Their aspirations were sectoral, but also they believed social integration in London to be a fast and easy process, because London is a multicultural metropolitan city. However, they experienced many difficulties during this transit period. Most of the obstacles were cultural, linguistic and emotional as they affected their social life. Hence, the lack of general and especially work experience in the UK is a notable barrier to accessing the labour market.

How did their knowledge affect their job and integration?

Beyond finding employment and actually working in an English environment, the main concern of my informants was the easy application of their knowledge to a specific field. The embrained knowledge

of those who studied in Greece and moved to the UK for work or university postgraduate studies was fully transferred and recognised by their employers. However full integration in the work culture and place was challenging – a finding common to all the participants. Furthermore, according to Bentley (1998), migration may change what it is considered as ‘common knowledge’ in one place into ‘uncommon knowledge’ in another – meaning, despite their technical knowledge, migrants face particular difficulties using their personal knowledge in the receiving country (Williams 2007).

I met many procedural difficulties. The main problem was the adaptation of the English lifestyle away from my family. The university [where he obtained his PhD] helped me in the procedural issues, and to fit in to the university’s community and system (Marios, 33, marketing lecturer).

Concluding this first empirical section, this quote sheds light on the cultural barriers to integration at a social and professional level. *Encultured* integration in the British system is a challenging obstacle for those who studied in Greece and then moved to England. Another, commonly mentioned barrier was the difficulty of acquiring a specialist vocabulary in some jobs. However, this may not be generalisable throughout my sample, because some of the professionals had a kind of international terminology in their sector and for them it was not problematic. In fact, it was easier for them to develop their skills and overcome the abovementioned barriers. In addition, they could transmit their knowledge to their students and colleagues and work effectively. These types of professional were mostly economists, managers, engineers and doctors.

Gaining new knowledge and its development within the UK

Knowledge transfer to the sending country from highly-skilled human capital requires and involves the attaining and development of new knowledge and skills abroad. In this section I discuss how my informants gained *embrained* and *embodied knowledge* within the UK; their personal development and the barriers met during work since accessing the labour market are already analysed above. Aspirations for the advancement of their careers are also discussed, and how they perceived their development of knowledge in England.

Did they feel the need for any training to become more competitive in the labour market?

Firstly, it is worth mentioning the importance of training, feedback and frequent evaluations for my informants’ development during their work experience. The main pattern noted is that they considered these ways of training whilst working as major factors in boosting their career potential; having an ongoing evolution of their skills; and becoming more competitive in the labour market. All the participants mentioned the fact that, in London, they have more potential for career development in comparison with Greece. In the set of quotes below, the accrual of embodied knowledge and the development not only of their careers but also of their personalities are reflected.

During my work experience here I have learnt how to be trained and train others. I have learnt a different culture, a different mentality. I opened my horizons. I became

more tolerant, more flexible, and law abiding – not like in Greece (Athina, 28, forensic mental health practitioner).

My manager noticed my thirst for more and she provided me with more training. In all the evaluations I was receiving very good feedback and credit. Nothing to compare with my experience in Switzerland and Greece. In London, I had a very good year in the hotel. It was a very good enterprise for training. My manager was more like a coach for me. I had evaluations every 3–6 months. At the end of the year she told that I was at a very good level and she wanted me to become the new manager of the hotel. And that is what I became (Stella, 27, senior revenue manager).

Furthermore, the co-production of embodied knowledge is very clear in the last two quotes – my sample's main pattern. This highlights that the production and development of technical knowledge and skills are not a one-way process. It requires the recognition of their work but also their managers' or employers' willingness to help them learn. My informants wanted to develop their careers and were focused on earning their employer's appreciation by having a strong work ethic, the potential for learning new skills and, as a result, were able to move to a better position in the labour market (King *et al.* 2016a). Hence, the need for the superiors to be like 'mentors' is another notable trend in my sample. Maria (25, junior marketing manager), in her narrative on her first work experience – in which she became manager after three years and was only 22 years old – emphasises this motivation.

I was very competitive and I wanted to learn as much as possible. My manager noticed that. For that reason I built a student–mentor mutual trust relationship with her. She taught me everything. She was always telling me 'You have to achieve the point where you will not need me anymore'.

Summarising, on this point – at which the participants are working and are fully integrated in their working environment and culture – they do not imagine barriers related to the production of knowledge. Their organisations/firms are playing the role of 'teaching organisations'. According to Lundvall and Johnson (1994), this type of organisation represents a model which attempts to maximise their employees' knowledge through company-wise strategies. Migrants potentially will have positive affects through this process, such as acting as sources of different types of knowledge and creativity. However it is possible – as I will explain later – to encounter barriers due to the intuitional context (Williams 2007). So there is knowledge transfer within their work, without any obvious difficulties in learning or transferring their expertise to their colleagues.

New knowledge achieved in the UK, and barriers to it.

This type of *embodied* and *embrained* new knowledge, however, does not include the use of much personal knowledge. This kind of co-production and co-ordination sometimes appears to be softly restrictive and moderated by firms/companies/employers. Even employers tend to be 'mentors' and aspire to be teaching organisations. In fact they are focused on specific competing areas of interest and these may produce barriers to knowledge-sharing (Williams 2007). Maria (25, junior marketing

manager) added to her narrative on her manager that ‘I had to do any task in the way directed by my manager’. Having the freedom to use her skills and creativity to proceed independently with her tasks was not acceptable by her manager. This motive is common in the literature of knowledge transfer and sharing within firms (Williams 2007).

As leader [higher position than before] I had to change my attitude and a new cycle of training started. They built me, they changed me and I gained new skills (Stella, 27, senior revenue manager).

The above quote confirms and applies, in a general pattern, my participants’ career development within their firms/organisations, which illustrates the ‘building’ of a certain kind of productive employee. The interviewees are developing new skills and knowledge which, of course, is tailor-made by their employers’/firms’ strategy or profile.

Summarising, the participants did not experience any obvious difficulty in developing new knowledge and skills. However, hidden barriers were noticed in the areas of co-ordination and linguistic distance – up to the point where they have acquired excellent language competence – not only in understanding and earning new knowledge, but for negotiation and social interaction within the working environment.

Cultural and social barriers – life satisfaction

Life satisfaction is examined because it includes the cultural and social obstacles in participants’ daily lives in England. It gives a broader picture of knowledge transfer. As I explained earlier, knowledge is not only about skills but is a broader term which lies at the heart of my analysis. Cultural and social factors not only affect career development, but also explain a major part of the migration cycle’s final step – the transfer of knowledge to the sending country.

Acquiring encultured and embedded knowledge may be challenging for migrants, as Williams discusses (2007). Language does not apply only in conceptual and work-related terminologies; it gives meaning and expresses social contexts. As Wittgenstein (1922) famously stated, ‘The limits of my language mean the limits of my world’. This very popular and multi-translated quote is used here to refer to the limitations of people trying to express themselves in a language different to their mother tongue, and to the limits on social understanding embedded in language. Language is an important element of intercultural communication and interaction (Williams 2007) and a key element in transnational knowledge transfers. Williams (2007) points out that migrants may be excluded from the local community or face a form of racism on the basis of their imperfect knowledge of the national language of their country of settlement. However, the skilled personnel in my interviews did not face any racist incident or feel any sense of exclusion; at least, that is what they said.³

Moreover, it was notable that the participants tended to socialise more with co-nationals or internationals rather than with locals. They frequently mentioned their perception that English people were ‘a bit unapproachable’ and distant, even in the working environment. Cultural factors played a significant role in this. Most of the informants expected to be closer friends with their colleagues, but they had to adjust to the fact that their colleagues were distant, they did not share personal issues and

³ It is possible, of course, that they were unaware of some subtle racist actions against them, or that they refused to acknowledge such incidents in their interviews.

had a different way of life. This explains the barriers in sharing cultural knowledge within work or in social life. It also explains the informants' need for sharing a sense of understanding or humour while socialising.

I prefer to socialise mostly with Greeks. I miss speaking in my mother tongue, in which I have a better understanding with my interlocutor, while sharing common sense of humour or social habits (Antonis, 41, associate professor in biology).

Furthermore, although some participants did not admit it in the first set of questions related to satisfaction with their social and daily life, more or less everyone had faced some difficulties. There were habits that they did not want to adapt to in London. Accommodation, living costs, and big distances within London were the main difficulties for them. Sharing a flat is not a very common habit in Greek culture. As Athina said, 'I don't have all my comforts, in terms of accommodation and daily life', meaning the difficulties of sharing a flat, the high rent cost and the long distances within London.

Overall, London was the interviewees' 'best choice' to start their careers and live in a European multicultural city. However, my informants still struggled a lot to adopt the way of life in England and feel fully integrated. These obstacles encourage ideas of return or moving to another country. Before migrating they aspired to better career prospects, without considering any potential difficulties. But at this point of their life and without any major consideration of a 'Brexit' scenario,⁴ they see themselves anywhere but not very soon back to Greece. The idea of return will be discussed in the next section.

From the UK to Greece: aspirations, knowledge transfer and barriers

Moving to the third phase of the migration cycle, I examine here the experiences and the attempts of my informants to transfer knowledge to Greece and the boundaries that discouraged and blocked their actions and aspirations. I am not taking for granted, of course, that my informants' experiences should be generalised. However their perceptions nuance the understanding of knowledge transfer and the associated barriers to contributing to development.

Following my typology of participants, I firstly discuss the *transporters* and their experiences of transferring knowledge and the barriers perceived and perhaps overcome. Secondly come the *dreamers*, examining their aspirations of transferring knowledge and the imagined barriers. Thirdly, as the Janus face of knowledge transfer, I introduce the *denialists*, those few participants who have not retained ties with their homeland.

The transporters – experiences of knowledge transfer and barriers

The term *transporters* applies to those six participants in my sample who had already tried to transfer new knowledge to improve things back home. However, in their narratives there were comments on cultural barriers – in terms of home-country acceptability; on mentality-related obstacles – either by the informants' new perceptions or those of Greek society in general; and on economic barriers – as a result of the crisis – all of which prevent and discourage these actual transfers.

⁴ The interviews were conducted in the weeks before the 23 June 2016 referendum in the UK. Only one out of 22 interviewees has acquired dual Greek and British citizenship.

Brain gain is the most promising outcome of brain drain (Faist 2008), meaning that the outflow of skilled human capital might benefit the sending country through transferring back financial or social remittances. Return is not the only option or way to transfer knowledge and therefore to contribute to development (Faist 2008). The participants were aware of this and, even if they would like to return home one day, at the moment they prefer to experiment with knowledge transfer through diaspora connections.

Diaspora mobilisation is not an 'easy' process and requires the support of the state or transnational organisations. One participant informed me about a Greek charity's initiative in London. It provides free business consultations to Greeks who want to create start-up businesses. What was interesting was the fact that these people were afraid to start their new businesses directly in Greece. They preferred to start them somewhere in England, and expand them to Greece afterwards when they will be more organised and prepared to manage risks. Additionally, this organisation is playing the role of 'overcoming barriers'. They help potential business people to find the right investors and funds, and put them in contact with the 'right people', as Yannis told me (29, employee of the charity).

Even though this initiative was perceived to overcome boundaries, some proved to be continuously salient. For instance, the preference of potential business-people to start up a company in England rather than in Greece proves the lack of trust they have in the Greek market and economy. These economic boundaries are related to the absence of potential investors and funding institutions.

To start something I need money. I could ask my parents. But with the current situation in Greece, I am not risking their money. Greece is a country where I could possibly lose everything the next day. (...) The state should give loans and funding and support these initiatives (Stella, 27, senior revenue manager).

The lack of state economic support is also met in academia. Professors and scientists face particular economic barriers while co-operating with Greek universities and research centres. The lack of equipment in research centres was problematic and at the same time it was seen as a push factor for emigration. For instance, Antonis (41, biology professor) said that he is co-operating with a research centre in Greece but he had to deal with many economic problems when trying to further their common research. For that reason he looked for funding in England to support their project and he bought laboratory equipment for the Greek centre in order to be able to work properly.

Furthermore, and beyond the economic problems, there were the cultural obstacles. The following were the issues most highlighted by the participants. They considered the 'mentality' of their co-nationals as a major problem that affected their attempts to fraternise. A lack of trust of new ideas coming in and the acceptability barriers for Greeks from abroad was the main pattern. Participants experienced exclusion and discrimination even from their co-nationals.

I introduced to Greek hotels my website as a London-based company, without telling them that I am Greek. They told me 'Yes, we are in'. So, I started to advertise them on my website. Recently, I contacted hotels in some Greek islands and I told them 'I am the Greek woman who started this website (...) would you like to advertise for free?' They replied very late and tended to be hesitant about the concept. Even though it was free advertising. So, I did a test. I sent other hotels the same email but as a

London-based company. Their responses was: ‘of course we want!’ (Stella, 27, senior revenue manager).

This sense of exclusion is experienced by other participants, too. Athina (28, forensic mental health practitioner) tried to apply a new psychological method in a dementia centre in Athens. She voluntarily organised a seminar, but she experienced ignorance and exclusion by her colleagues in Greece. They were suspicious of her motives, even though it was a volunteer concept. These cultural barriers of ascription were apparent during the seminar and finally the centre only partially followed the method. She felt disappointed and she could not do something similar soon in Greece.

Another notable trend was observed – the experimentation model of transferring knowledge. Participants were trying to transfer knowledge by experimenting from their current position abroad in small groups or peripheral towns until they were ready to expand them. This kind of experimentation is a key finding of my research and an innovative way for participants to experience the barriers and the potential of transferring something to Greece, and to better prepare these transfers. An illustrative example follows:

I want to make Greece the first country on bone marrow. It is difficult to convince everybody of the new methods. For that reason, I decided to start my campaign from my home town. I said to myself that if I can convince the citizens of this town to become donors, then I can convince the rest of the country. It was challenging and I faced particular difficulties – from the ignorance of ‘old school’ doctors to local authorities who saw me as a competitor. I have nothing to earn from this campaign, I am doing it because, as a researcher on cancer, I see how many people lose their life every day and it is sad to know that there is a way to help (...). To be honest, I think that in Greece the biggest obstacle is the Greeks (Sofia, 25, PhD on cancer).

These ‘closed doors’ are also obvious in the lack of communication and sharing of knowledge within their sectors and society. Participants who attempt to bring home something original or new faced ignorance from their colleagues. The age factor also played a significant role in the acceptability criteria.

Overall, the barriers perceived by the *transporters* were not only sectoral but in society at large. The embrained and embodied knowledge was sometimes only partially transferred due to these cultural barriers. The economic barriers were eventually less important in comparison with the cultural. The fact that they do not feel welcome in their own home country is a major obstacle, and for that reason some of the participants are more sceptical about future cross-border actions.

The dreamers – aspirations of knowledge transfer

The *dreamers*, the biggest group of participants (12) aspire to transfer new ideas to the sending country in order to improve conditions back home. They aspire to give a better ‘brand name’ to Greece. However their imaginations for change are accompanied by many perceived obstacles. This is why, even if these boundaries refer only to imagined actions, they give fruitful information on the prevention of transfers.

Participants expressed their aspirations that their transfers would be a way to make changes in the homeland. However, as a participant pointed out: ‘I want to change things back home, but I need support, I want to benefit from it and see some appreciation and co-operation from the country’s side as well’. They tended to insist on the responsibility and the need for support from the home-country government in improving conditions in Greece. Nevertheless, when asked about possible action to be taken by them, interviewees emphasised first the barriers related to the Greek mentality that could block their actions, and then the economic barriers.

Cultural barriers were encountered in their aspirations to transfer capital from abroad to the country of origin, because migrants saw themselves as changed and they could evaluate in a fresh way the situation back home. The cultural and political conditions in Greece were absolutely central in the migration trajectories of the participants. As Pavlos (33, risk manager at an international bank) put it:

I would like to do something in Greece. But at the moment I don’t see the appropriate circumstances. The political and economic instability, the Greek reality and the constant changes in taxes and policies are major obstacles.

Many aspirations were related to contributions within sectors; however, the barriers were seen as those of society at large and not only as obstacles within specific sectors. Many participants referred to imaginary barriers, such as the ‘clientelism’ part of Greek society in the last few decades, in which people find employment not according to their qualifications but according to their family’s asymmetric relationships with Greek politicians. They referred to this as an important reason not only preventing their transfers and their return to Greece but as a push factor for emigration.

I would not like to return and work in Greece because all that matters is the contacts that you have. Here [in England] is all about the qualifications and competences that you have (Maria, 25, junior marketing manager).

In Greece, if you want to do something you need contacts. I don’t like to use contacts and ask for favours. I don’t think that help is a favour. I want someone to invest in my idea, not because he knows my parents. I don’t need that (Stella, 27, senior revenue manager).

However, not everything was grey in the participants’ imaginations. They were participants who worked on their future transfers actively and creatively and expected to overcome the societal barriers and the possible narrow acceptance by Greeks of bringing home new ideas and tools.

I want to return to Greece in five years. I would like to give seminars to people on the new technologies. To introduce them to what I’ve learnt, share my knowledge with them. Of course, there will be some difficulties in doing so, but this is in all sectors in Greece. But if you love what you do and know what you are going to face you can overcome it (Christos, 35, IT expert).

Additionally, aspirations for experimentation were met as well. Participants who had a business plan tended to work on it at an experimental level until it became a success story, and then they

expanded it. Experimentation is a new way of examining knowledge transfers, because even if these attempts or aspirations are at an early stage, still there is the exchange and the application of new knowledge gained in the country of emigration to the country of origin.

All in all, most of the participants had moved to London in the last few years; however, they already had aspirations not only in terms of returning or not, but also of contributing to Greece's development. Their aspirations related to the transfer of their new embodied knowledge back home and to new inputs to both their particular sectors and to society at large. The sample was very diverse. There were participants who aspired to a very specific transfer with or without barriers; others who had encountered more barriers and found fewer possibilities to succeed in their transfers; finally there were some who had vague ideas and aspirations, but still they had stereotypical perceptions of barriers.

The denialists – the Janus face of knowledge transfer

In order not to end up with a partial approach to knowledge transfer, I also examine another aspect of the same concept in a negative way, which is deliberately burning bridges between the participants and their home, and their consequent unwillingness to transfer their knowledge. It could be described as the Janus face of knowledge transfer. There was a small group of participants who expressed their strong opposition to transferring knowledge to Greece. Even if only four of my participants can be categorised as 'the denialists', it is still interesting to discuss them.

Faist (2008) characterised the phenomenon of the lack of sustained ties with those who stayed in the sending country and the lack of migrants' potential for return as *brain desertification* – considered as the worst outcome of brain drain. However, I discuss it here to highlight the importance of perceived barriers and aspirations for knowledge transfer by diaspora mobilisation or return. Participants were expressing their opposition similarly in the following quote:

I don't want to return. It's not my priority to transfer something to Greece. Even if I still have contacts in Greece, but I see so many reasons to not do something there. In education, especially, there is no acceptance of new ideas. They are very negative. They are afraid to adopt new models. They don't learn easily. They are very negative in the concept of the evaluation. Evaluation in general, in the health system, in politics... (Petros, 27, teacher).

As evidenced by the above comment, the *denialists* were very judgmental and disappointed by the Greek mentality, and the political and social systems. Another participant talked of a series of barriers experienced when attempting to set up co-operation with a Greek university and decided not to try a future one.

The Greeks in Greece see the Greeks from abroad competitively and we are more arrogant, and negative about their mentality. They don't want interaction with foreign universities and they are closed to new ideas and knowledge (...). I had not the intention for co-operation. I have no intention to work again with Greece. I am not excited about it. I would prefer to work with a US university, with someone with better accessibility and not worst (Marios, 33, marketing lecturer).

Summarising the denialists, these were participants who did not even retain personal ties back home; for them the barriers were not seen just as barriers for transfer but as reasons for not returning or retaining ties with the country due to negative situations and experiences. These denialists clearly resonate with Faist's definition of brain desertification, meaning the highly skilled migrants who 'do not return and do not sustain any ties with those who stayed in the countries of origin' (Faist 2008: 33).

In this overall section on aspirations and barriers, I have to admit that it is impossible to generalise on the participants' perceptions apart from the conclusion that much depends on the support of the state in encouraging the Greek skilled migrants to contribute their new and developed knowledge to help Greece change the scenery and recover from the crisis. Participants might want (or not) to remit their knowledge home, but that depends on the perceptions of barriers during these transfers and state policies should take them into consideration.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to contribute an improved and Greek-situated typology of the concept of knowledge transfer within the migration and development literature. It aims also to arrive at a theoretically nuanced understanding of the typologies on aspirations and knowledge transfer, experimentation and the categorisation of barriers. While the migration and development nexus sees migrants as the new contributors to development, it has so far ignored their voices and more precisely their experiences of transferring knowledge and skills at every stage of the migration cycle. At the same time, the academic literature on the topic seems to ignore the barriers perceived and imagined by the migrants.

Returning to the research question posed at the beginning of this paper, namely 'How do highly skilled Greek migrants in London transfer their skills and what are the barriers to this knowledge transfer?', it is now possible to state that the evidence shows that individuals' trajectories and perceptions of social remittances are shaped by their ongoing ties to the country of origin. The latter reinforces or weakens their will to contribute to the country's recovery after the crisis. The participants remain clear concerning their perceptions of the existence of barriers that prevent ambitions for knowledge transfer, or even push these aspirations away. As a result, their thinking becomes more individualistic and they put their personal gain before the greater good of society.

The study has shown that the extent to which Greek professionals in London aspire to or do contribute by transferring their knowledge to Greece depends mostly on the cultural barriers perceived about their co-nationals. The mentality-related obstacles to sharing new knowledge and acceptance are more central than the economic obstacles. Their transnational actions and aspirations for change in specific sectors or in society in general rely on personal reasons and ties with the country, which encourages or not these transfers. It depends on an understanding of the migrants' experiences during the migration cycle. Their experiences before migrating strongly affect what they currently do in the country of settlement. And what they do in the host country, accompanied by the ties that they retain or not with the country of origin, explains how migrants remit or aspire to promote their ideas and knowledge back home.

The findings fall within the theoretical framework presented in the current literature on knowledge transfer within the development and migration nexus. Some of the most significant outcomes emerging from this study are as follows.

Firstly, in the stage of transferring knowledge from Greece to the UK, the main finding was that the embrained knowledge was at least partially transferable, because even if it was built on soft skills and broad knowledge, still I had cases of participants who highlighted the existence of barriers. However, the lack of specialisation and work experience in England was problematic for most of the participants when trying to access the English labour market. Even more, participants' aspirations before emigration were more optimistic about living and finding employment in London, a metropolitan and multicultural city, rather than their actually experienced outcomes.

Secondly, the findings on knowledge development within the UK gave me information on some of the barriers encountered in the acquisition of new skills. For instance, linguistic barriers were not only related to a lack of use of special terminologies, but also related to cultural factors in social integration and sharing knowledge within the working environment. Hence, migrants faced cultural and social barriers to adapting to life in England, even though London was their most favourable destination in Europe in order to develop their careers. These barriers played a significant role in shaping their aspirations for return or moving to another country.

Thirdly, based on my threefold typology of participants, I examined the experiences of individuals who tried to remit their new knowledge home. They subjectively experienced not only cultural and economic barriers within specific sectors, but generally in the Greek society. They see the 'Greek mentality' of their co-nationals as the biggest obstacle, which even resulted in a sense of exclusion towards them – factors that probably prevent them from future actions. Thereafter, I discussed the participants' aspirations to transfer new knowledge back home. Participants had mainly optimistic ambitions of making a change in their homeland. However, they came up against many barriers – mentality-related mostly – that did not allow them to fulfil their aspirations. It was also notable that some respondents in my small sample did not have the will to remit or retain relationships with the country of origin.

Furthermore, one new finding of my research was another type inherent to knowledge transfer and aspirations, which I call *experimentation*. This nuances the understanding of transnational knowledge transfer and provides a new way of transferring through reducing the risks. Thus, through experimentation, migrants use their acquired knowledge to experiment on small targets without risking too much. As a result, they have an actual awareness of the barriers that they will deal with in the future, so they will be more prepared to overcome them in order to achieve their aspirations at a greater level.

This study highlights the importance of gaining a better understanding of the knowledge transfer concept within the migration cycle. It indicates that barriers are present even if they are subjectively perceived by the migrant. Although admittedly small-scale, this is the first study to investigate two-way knowledge transfer in the Greek migration cycle. The findings of this research could be used to help the state's future policies in order to turn the brain drain into brain gain by transferring and using the knowledge acquired by migrants.

However, generalisation should be avoided, due to the small size of the sample. Nevertheless, the 'highly-skilled Greek migrants in London' sample offers an interesting case study for the exploration of such migrants' experiences and perceptions of the central themes of my analysis: knowledge transfer and its barriers.

Finally, this research has raised many questions in need of further investigation. It would be interesting to compare the experiences and aspirations of knowledge transfer of Greek skilled migrants

in other European countries or with skilled migrants from other European countries.⁵ Possible further research should focus on determining how to overcome the barriers to knowledge transfer in order for it to be used for development in the countries of origin.

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⁵ These future research comparisons will be achieved to some extent by the wider YMOBILITY project.

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