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Η ΔΙΑΚΥΒΕΡΝΗΣΗ ΤΗΣ ΜΗ ΝΟΜΙΜΗΣ ΜΕΤΑΝΑΣΤΕΥΣΗΣ
GOVERNING IRREGULAR MIGRATION

ΜΕΛΕΤΗ ΠΕΡΙΠΤΩΣΗΣ
CASE STUDY

'It is not just the money. It is also how the people think over there'
Retracing the journey of Pakistani migrants to Greece

Michaela Maroufof

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Case Study: Migration System 3 (Pakistan)

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1. Introduction

Migration as a process is inherently intertwined with the history and the present of the country of Pakistan. Approximately four million Pakistanis live outside their country, half of which reside in Europe; Pakistani diaspora in the UK is considered the biggest in Europe. At the same time, Pakistan has not only been the origin, but also the destination or transit of multiple migratory flows; with over 1.6 million people from Afghanistan, the country hosts one of the largest refugee population anywhere in the world. This socially embedded experience of mobility, both within and beyond the country's borders, has defined to a great extent not only the actual constitution of the population of Pakistan, but also the way the national culture has been shaped and understood since its establishment (1947). Furthermore, migration from Pakistan to other countries is an interesting case to study as it reflects in a paradigmatic way how contemporary migration of Pakistanis has evolved during the last decades; according to the literature, Pakistanis' movement to Europe has developed in two distinct phases: in the early 1950s large groups of young Pakistani men from peasant communities moved to the UK to work in the construction sector, while in the following decades it was also educated members of middle class background who moved not only to the UK, but to Norway and Denmark, as well; this first phase of legal immigration to Europe that led to the permanent establishment of rather homogeneous migrant communities to the countries of destination was followed by an irregular stage of migratory movement that started in the early 1990s. This shift has been a product of a combination of factors concerning movement in the Middle East and Europe and concerned the migration of the most poorest groups through smuggling networks (Youssef, 2013).

Within the context of Pakistani migration, the case of Greece as a critical pathway for migratory flows to Europe during the last few years acquires a special interest. For a large group of Pakistani migrants Greece has become an important destination country: immigrants started arriving in the country in the 1970s so as to work in the shipping industry (Dermetzopoulos et al., 2009; Leghari, 2009), which, according to Tonchev, was due to bilateral and trade agreements signed for their temporary employment (2007); their influx has gradually and steadily increased in the subsequent years taking irregular forms, both in terms of entry and residence status. Their actual numbers cannot be known: based on the 2011 census, over 34,000 Pakistanis resided in Greece, while the Labour Force Survey - which merely provides estimates, yet does indicate trends- reveals that their numbers started increasing sharply after 2007.[1] A combination of data of censuses, apprehensions and valid residence permits[2] suggests that a significant number of Pakistani migrants residing in the country remain irregular.

A question that emerges with urgency both in the scholarly literature and in public life nowadays, then, is why and how people decide to migrate embarking upon a journey and a project that is irregular? To what extent migration control policies affect their decisions? This is the issue running through the IRMA research project ('The Governance of Irregular Migration: States, Actors and Intermediaries'), as well as the present report that fundamentally poses the following question: which are the factors, policies and actors that influence Pakistanis' plans, actions and decisions before leaving, while traveling and when arriving to Greece? In an attempt to shed light to these issues, we understand irregular migration not as an exception or pathology, but as a structural feature, if not an

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[1] See Graph 4.

[2] For instance, according to the 2011 census over 34,000 Pakistanis resided in Greece while the valid stay permits of Pakistani citizens during that time barely exceeded 17,000. In addition, the number of Pakistani citizens apprehended by the police for irregular entry or stay in Greece over the past years has been significant (see Table 1).

inherent normalcy, of modern society. As Hatziprokopiou and Triandafyllidou (2013: 15) observe, 'in its political dimension undocumented migration is a product of immigration controls and immigration law in receiving nation states; in its economic dimension, it is propelled by an increased demand for specific types of work and for low-cost, flexible and unprotected labour'. At the background of these two lie the structural and political factors that cause global migration, while in between them we cannot but notice the growth of an enormous infrastructure comprised by the trafficking and smuggling markets. Re-theorizing undocumented migration as a complex phenomenon that unravels at multiple levels and contexts, IRMA project in general and this report in particular lay special emphasis on migrants' agency and its relation with the state and migration policies. Düvell notes that 'there are three major forces in irregular migration: human agency, economic forces, and politics' (2009); in this report we are going to examine the way these three forces intertwine in the case of irregular Pakistani migrants in Greece by asking the following questions:

- How do the Greek policies of migration and asylum management and migration control affect the plans and the actions of Pakistani irregular migrants?

- What other factors affect the migrants' plans? Are those factors more effective in influencing their decisions?

In order to seek the answers to the above issues, we trace the decision-making process followed by Pakistani migrants by reconstructing the course of the irregular migratory project as it is experienced by them. In the following sections, after presenting the methodology used, we follow this process chronologically and according to the migrants' narratives: from the decision to migrate in an irregular way, to opting for Greece as the destination or transit country; then, from the journey to and then settlement in the country, to the different forms of labour in which migrants are employed and the migration control and management policies that they are subjected to; finally, we examine Pakistani migrants' future plans, including their decision to return back, move to other destinations or remain in the country.

2. Methodology

Migration literature most often views irregular migrants as objects or victims of migration regimes; moreover, it has been criticized for equating migrants with workers and thus downplaying non-economic factors related with the decision-making to migrate (Anderson & Ruhs, 2010 and Papadopoulos et al., 2008). At the same time and in what concerns research on migration in Greece, Pakistani migrants have not been an object of study until recently. The focus has been primarily laid on those migratory flows from the Balkans while overlooking others moving from Asia and Africa (Dermertzopoulos et al., 2009). The study of Dimitriadi (2013) stands as an exception examining the issue of transit migration: combining theoretical analysis and empirical fieldwork, it focuses on the case study of irregular migratory flows from South and Southeast Asia to Greece -including the one from Pakistan, while taking into account issues of context, as well as agency.

The present report is structured so as to respond to the above gaps in literature that account for the oldest concern in social sciences, that of the relationship between social structure and human agency (Hatziprokopiou & Triandafyllidou, 2013: 20). This correlation has always been one of the most persistent issues in the field of migration studies with some theoretical approaches leaning towards the one or the other direction, while focusing on different levels of analysis (Bakewell, 2010 and Massey, 1990). Within the context of the present report, migration is understood as a positive choice and not a product of forced imposition from above (Koser, 2009) and, as a result, the focus is laid on the individual will and subjectivity of the migrant. Both structural limitations at the macro level and migration control policies at the meso level set the ground for migration, but the decision-making remains a process enacted by individuals themselves (micro level). This emerges as a product of interplay between individual identities and aspirations in relation with social networks, households, local traditions, cultural practices and survival strategies.

Taking into account the above, research has been divided into two phases: The first engaged with desk research and includes data collection, review of the existing literature and interviews with stakeholders and authorities in order to set the background based on existing knowledge on irregular migration between Pakistan and Greece; the second and most important research phase consisted of fieldwork on the ground and comprised a series of interviews with Pakistani migrants.

Concerning the first stage, ten interviews have been conducted with government officials and other stakeholders, such as representatives of NGOs and Pakistani associations in Greece between February and April 2013.[3] As for the second, we have conducted 30 interviews with irregular Pakistani immigrants in Greece; ten interviews with Pakistani migrants in Greece who had applied for participation to the IOM Assisted Voluntary Return program; finally, five interviews via Skype with Pakistanis who at the time of the interview did reside in Pakistan and had considered the option of migrating to Greece or Europe, but decided not to proceed. Castles, De Haas and Miller (2014: 324) define irregular migration as a 'vague blanket term' that includes among other categories, such as 'legal entrants who overstay their entry visas, illegal border-crossers and asylum seekers not regarded as genuine refugees': for this reason and for the purposes of this study we have proceeded to interviews with 20 undocumented Pakistani migrants, 7 asylum seekers and 13 detainees. As for the demographic characteristics of our sample, it consisted of young men of ages ranging between 17 and 53 years old. This reflects the almost exclusively male presence of Pakistani migrants in the country: this is an issue discussed below that can be explained by the existing 'culture of migration' in

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[3] See Annex I.

the country of origin, as well as by the pragmatic obstacles posed by the Greek state to any attempts for family unification (Lazarescu & Broersma, 2010). Finally, an attempt was made to include in the sample individuals with different periods of stay in the country, hence the time spent in the country is ranging from one to ten years.

All interviews took place between September 2013 and September 2014, mainly in Athens, in public places such as cafes and squares or in the informants' private homes, in many cases with the assistance of three Pakistani interpreters, as the languages in which the interviews were conducted were Greek and Urdu. The sample was selected using the 'snowball' technique with the exception of those interviews conducted during our two visits to the pre-departure facilities of Amygdaleza and in the premises of the IOM office of Athens, where, of course, the interviewees were explained the purposes of our study and it was clarified to them that their participation is voluntary. The interviews were conducted with the use of a semi-structured questionnaire, the main themes of which included the decision, the preparation and realization of the journey; the settlement and employment in Greece; issues pertaining to legal documents; and future plans.

Given the nature of this project, we should lastly allude to ethical issues concerning research on irregular migration: throughout the interviews, it has not always been easy for the researcher to gain the trust of the interviewees, especially due to their status of irregularity and in the context of increased control migration policies in the country; it was for that reason that the interpreters often acted as intermediaries between the interviewer and the interviewees. Complications have also arisen due to the fact that, on the one hand, research aimed at shedding light to those particular aspects of the migratory project that the migrant does not want to reveal and, on the other, as in many cases the interviewee was expecting from the researcher to help him improve his plight. Those challenges posed by the research of undocumented migration (Düvell et al., 2008) have been taken into account both during the fieldwork and in the presentation and dissemination of the findings.

3. The decision to migrate and the journey to Greece

3.1 Deciding to migrate and the choice of destination

To begin with, what emerges from the fieldwork conducted is that, while Greece is mainly seen as the pathway to Europe for most populations arriving from Asia and Africa, for instance, for the Afghans (Dimitriadi, 2013), it does constitute the initially aimed destination for a large group of Pakistani migrants. According to Leghari (2009) this can be explained as following: after being an area of transit migration for Pakistanis, Greece became a new destination country for reasons linked to the tighter control policies in North-Western Europe, the centrality of its geographical position, and its economic development, as well as the possibility of acquiring a residence permit through the regularization programs of the period between 1998 and 2005, which became known to Pakistani prospective migrants via their social networks. Sound as it may be, this argumentation is not enough in itself to explicate how individuals however reach the decision to migrate to Greece: below we attempt to reconstruct the decision-making process followed in their country of origin by accounting for a variety of different factors, contexts and actors.

The most obvious reason explaining why individuals decide to migrate from Pakistan to Greece is the quest for labour due to economic hardship prevailing in their home country: in terms of Lee's 'push-pull theory' (1966), the main push factors include unemployment and low wages, lack of a sense of security and poor living conditions, while among the key pull factors attracting migrants to Europe in general and Greece in particular are the availability of jobs, the better working conditions and the better life standards.[4] Within the same rationale, neoclassical economic approaches view migration and return migration as a 'cost-benefit decision' with the maximum expected lifetime earnings set as goal. In this context, a decision to invest in migration is very much alike investing in education as it is expected to lead to additional lifetime earnings (Castles, De Haas & Miller, 2014: 29-30). However, viewing Pakistani migration as strictly labour migration does not take into account environmental factors, as well as conflicts related with local contexts and traditions (Dimitriadi, 2013). Seven of the persons interviewed in Greece, for instance, left Pakistan as they considered that their life was in danger there. Most of them did not want to discuss the reasons in detail, but in most cases the threat appeared to be linked to family vendettas.

> *"I have a problem, I married, how is it called? Love marriage and for that reason I have a serious problem, they killed my wife[5] and I left from there. (…) I did not think of anything, I thought they killed my wife, they might also kill me and to get out of here. To leave from here and then I see where I go."* (Hamza, 27 years old).

In addition, one of our interviewees was forced to migrate for environmental reasons as the floods of 2010 cost him his home and his job.

Literature also attributes a primary role to kinship and the household, which are frequently considered as the most powerful driving forces of international migration from the developing world (Becker, 1976). The New Economics of Labor Migration (NELM) regards migrants as 'target earners' who leave the host country as soon as they meet the economic goals that they have set: in this context, migration decisions are usually made by households. This approach views migration as 'a

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[4] See also Farooq et al. (2014).

[5] His wife was murdered by her own family because she got married without their permission.

risk-sharing behavior of families, as migrants' remittances provide income insurance for households of origin' (Castles, De Haas & Miller, 2014: 38). The case of migration from Pakistan and South Asia in general to Europe and the UK in particular often serves as an eloquent example, especially in anthropology literature, of this trend emphasizing the centrality of family and the clan. In the case of the fieldwork conducted for the purposes of this research, one cannot overlook, as well, the central role of Pakistani migrants' families in the migration decision-making: in fact, eleven of our interviewees explicitly stated during our interviews that they reached the decision to leave the country and undertake the journey to Greece after consulting with their families or urged by their families.[6] Migrating emerges more as a collective than as an individual decision. In all of those cases, interviewees by 'family' referred to their parents and siblings, who were in need of their support, with the burden of providing for the family weighing usually the oldest son or the oldest single son.

In line with this emphasis on kinship and the household is the importance currently attributed to social networks in generating migration, facilitating the spread of information on labour market opportunities and conditioning the migration process (see Poros, 2008 and Favell, 2003): as Arango notes 'the importance of social networks for migration can hardly be overstated' (2004: 28). Adding further to this, Foner claims that migration itself can be conceptualised as a process of 'network building' and that having a close family member or a close friend in the country determines the choice of the destination (quoted in Ahmad 2008: 128). Testifying to the above tendency in literature, almost all our interviewees explained that choosing Greece as their country of destination was mainly due to the existence of networks that they either drew information from or they thought they could depend on upon their arrival.

Another factor related with the above and that acquires increasing importance in literature in the last few years is the smuggling network. Apart from noticing the increasing professionalization and marketization of the migrant smuggling process (Triandafyllidou & Maroukis, 2012), literature also examines the complicated role that the smuggler plays in the migratory project. Ahmad (2008: 137) notes that smuggling 'grew organically' as 'a two-way exchange of commodities, people and information' initiated by 'UK returnees who brought goods with them and then actively spread the word and recruited individuals and groups of men to be transported overland (illegally) to the UK for payment of a fee'. Throughout the interviews, the smuggler appears as highly influential in the decision-making process, as he plays a multi-faceted role: in facilitating individuals to overcome obstacles that result directly from restrictive asylum or immigration measures, his role is complementary and intertwined with state control policies; migrants remain dependent economically and in terms of information and networking on the smuggler: some of our interviewees were recruited directly by smugglers, who convinced them that there would be a good work opportunity waiting for them in the destination country, a reassurance that in all cases turned out to be by large untrue. In many cases, however, the interviewees appear as having developed relations of trust with the smuggler that resemble to those examined above concerning kinship or social networks. In order to underline the role played by the smuggler, it should be noted that the vast majority of our interviewees come from Gujrat district, where the rates of human smuggling to the West are supposed to be the highest in the entire country (Ahmad, 2008: 137).

The majority of our interviewees did in fact decide to migrate for economic purposes, either due to lack of employment or due to the low pay of employment in Pakistan, and after consulting with their families; however, their main expectations were not restricted in mere survival for themselves and their families.

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[6] This does not mean that the wellbeing of their families was not an important determining factor for the remaining interviewees judging by their remitting behavior, yet 11 interviewees pointed to their family as describing the decision process.

"We were three friends from village, at night we sat there for company and we spoke of going to Greece. We may have a better life, to gather some money, to build some houses, what it is to make better life. And we came." (Babar, 33 years old)

Without downplaying the role played by social networks and kinship, the household cannot be understood as an unproblematic and closed unit that allocates labour, pools income and distributes it among its members (Ahmad, 2008: 133); in the same way, human experience cannot be compartmentalized and risk-entailing decisions, such as the migratory one, cannot be attributed to economic reasons solely, as is the case of mainstream migration theories.

"Sameer: I had normally both a job and money but I wanted to go to Europe. That's why I left.
Interviewer: So you wanted to see something…
Sameer: Something new." (Sameer, 30 years old)

Furthermore, we should not fail to notice, as Ahmad observes, that migration 'more than ever holds the imagined promise of material and experiential novelty to Pakistani youth, despite the fact that, in objective terms, it offers fewer obviously identifiable rewards than it did in say, the 1970' (2008).

"I see dreams, much money and car and good beautiful life (…) There good life. To gather money quickly and to build house, to get a car, stuff like that (…) I wasn't thinking of anything (specific) only that was on my mind: I will go to Europe, I will live better. " (Usman, 28 years old)

All in all, when considering the reasons for migrating from Pakistan to Greece, economic reasons cannot easily be separated from the construction of social identities, in a country where national culture has been largely defined by the migratory process.

"He says it is too many, it is not just the money. It is also how the people think over there, because those countries are more ahead and have another thought; that is to say, it is not the same. He also wanted to know that." (Obaid, 29 years old)

Analyses of irregular migration should allow for a combination of levels, factors and contexts that take into account also what it means for male individuals in Pakistan to experience this mobility when they make the passage from their childhood to becoming male adults.

3.2 Entering the Country

Since the ratification of the first Greek migration law in 1991, the only way for a foreign worker to legally enter the country and acquire a residence permit with the purpose of employment has been through the invitation procedure ('metaklisi'). Yet, the so-called 'metaklisi' has been very time-consuming and far too complicated to respond to changing labour market needs. It is also completely unrealistic considering the labour market sector, where immigrants are predominantly employed - such as agriculture, construction, catering, small factories, retail services and domestic work (Triandafyllidou & Maroufof, 2008). In addition, while there are Greek consular authorities present in Pakistan, the option of entering Greece by issuing a (tourist) Visa was not mentioned by any of our interviewees. Consequently, entering the country in an irregular way with the facilitation of human smugglers appears to be the only choice available for those wishing to migrate to Greece.

According to the migrants' narratives, the standard route followed is via Iran and Turkey, while the arrangements of the journey are made in Pakistan. In many cases, as in the case of Hasnat, the interviewees did hold a visa that allowed them to enter Iran, but that was not the case with entering Turkey and Greece.

"It was a friend of his who did this job, who brings persons to Greece, he spoke with him and as everyone else came, he entered Iran with a visa, from there Turkey. Everyone who comes here until Iran they have a visa. In Turkey they also give visa but in Turkey to get a visa wants more money and they don't get a visa, they are smuggled" (Hasnat, 28 years old)

In fact only one among our interviewees entered Turkey holding a visa and continued his journey from there in an irregular manner. In effect, it has been brought to our attention by both the migrants interviewed in Greece and the civil society organizations interviewed in Turkey that Pakistani migrants transiting through Turkey on their way to Greece spend the entire time of their stay in the country in houses provided by the smugglers, as they are instructed to avoid leaving those premises out of fear of being intercepted by the Turkish police.

Another important aspect emerging from the interviews concerns the cost of the journey, which ranges between 3,000 and 8,000 Euros. The agreement on the amount is made before the journey begins and the immigrants are not expected to pay the entire sum at once. Negotiations lead to different agreements on the payment, as Ibrahim, who arrived in Greece in 2004, narrates:

"No, we have decided that (the cost of the journey) since the beginning. From when we start from my home we decide we give that much money until we arrive to Athens. (…) We give from Turkey when we arrive, the rest we give from here, when we arrive. " (Ibrahim, 28 years old)

Others have agreed to pay an amount, in most cases half of the agreed cost, before the journey begins and the remaining sum is either paid upon arrival by their families back in Pakistan or, in a few cases, it is even paid by them in small installments as they start working in the destination country.

"Eh, I sold, I have a small truck there, I sold also that, I have also a shop, I sold also shop, I gathered that and I came." (Mazhar, 30 years old)

The prospective migrants collect the required funds either by sacrificing pieces of their personal or family fortune, for instance by selling pieces of land, small businesses, houses or even items such as cars or jewelry, or by relying on their social networking, namely by receiving loans from members of their (extended) family or friends or having close relatives (mainly siblings), who are already abroad able to finance their journey.

"Me, I had nothing. I sold a piece of land and (the amount) that was missing I got a loan from the relatives and I repaid." (Naeem, 19 years old)

"Some a friend gave, some dad. (…) Then I gave some the one who brought me here, then slowly-slowly I gave when I worked. I did like this. I didn't give right away." (Tanveer, 28 years old)

According to Dimitriadi (2013) the different forms of capital play a crucial role to the migration endeavor in all of its different phases. Mainstream theories emphasize the economic capital as a cause of labor migration; in many instances it does determine the course of the journey or even the choice of the destination. In this respect, social capital is also considered as both a cause of migration and a determinant of the migration destination. Throughout the interviews it becomes evident that social capital does not always correspond to the expectation of its holders- as in many cases social networks provide information that is false or outdated or it generates false assumptions over the availability of support; however, it still remains a fundamental factor in the decision-making process. Moreover, the quotes cited above attest to the fact that social and economic capital become combined and intertwined in the process of the decision-making by individuals to move away from Pakistan. Migrants' narratives reflect the capacity of social capital to convert into economic capital

under certain conditions enabling persons of different economic means to achieve the same goal. This is evident in the case of Tanveer who could rely on the relationship of trust developed between himself and his smuggler in order to make an agreement that would allow him to start paying for part of the cost after he started working in the destination country, as well as in the case of Naeem who relied on his relatives so as to obtain a loan which he would later repay.

At this point, we should also take into account that entering the country in an irregular way has been made more difficult by the fact that the Greek state has largely intensified during the last few years its internal and external control policies in an attempt to respond to those persistent arrivals, as well to the relevant pressures from the EU. Large control operations within the borders of the country, such as 'Xenios Zeus' later replaced by 'Theseus', aimed at apprehending irregular migrants, also in major port cities like Patras and Igoumenitsa which constitute the country's main exit points. In addition, state authorities have launched operation 'Aspida' aimed at safeguarding the borders by increasing the number of border guards serving in the wider area of Evros and building a 12.5 km fence along the Evros border (Triandafyllidou et al., 2014). As for the actual impact of these policies to irregular migratory flows, based on the Hellenic Police's data on apprehensions of third country nationals, the increase of control in the Greek-Turkish land border, which met its pick in 2010 and 2011 with about 50,000 apprehensions yearly, appears not to have deterred, but to have shifted the flows from the land to the sea border: in 2013 and 2014 apprehensions in the Evros region do not exceed 1,500 per year, while at the same time apprehensions at the sea border have increased sharply from barely over 2,500 in 2013 to over 20,000 in 2014.

All in all, the intensification of border controls and the tightening of control migration policies in general appear to have had a direct impact on irregular migrants in Greece, including Pakistanis. However, as it will be discussed below, the interviews reveal that the reasons for which Pakistani migrants do not appear as having a strong presence in the migratory inflows of the past few years are linked more to the transformation of the labour market conditions, as well as to the extension of detention of irregular migrants.

4. Pakistani immigrants in Greece

Despite the fact that Greece started receiving small numbers of immigrants from Pakistan since the 1970's, mainly working in the shipping industry, it was during the 1990s and 2000s that the country gradually became a destination for Pakistani migrants (Lazarescu & Broersma, 2010). As mentioned above, according to the 2011 census over 34,000 Pakistanis resided in Greece, while their numbers started increasing sharply after 2007.[7] Yet, since 2012 the numbers of Pakistani migrants have begun to drop, as there is a clear tendency of returning back to their country of origin, while at the same time migratory influxes have been decreasing dramatically. This official evidence largely coincides with fieldwork findings: when asked whether friends or family members are making inquiries about migrating to Greece, the vast majority of our interviewees responded that this is no longer the case. The reason for that is that the high number of Pakistani who return back have communicated their experiences shaping thus the image of Greece being no longer a prosperous destination and a place offering labour or other opportunities. Moreover, Greece is no longer attractive as a transit country to other European countries, either, as the risk of being apprehended and detained is too high urging those migrating to seek alternative routes into Europe faced with the possibility of detention. The interviews conducted with representatives from the Pakistani associations testify to this shift (Interview 1 & Interview 3).

Graph 1: Pakistani citizens residing in Greece (2002-2014)
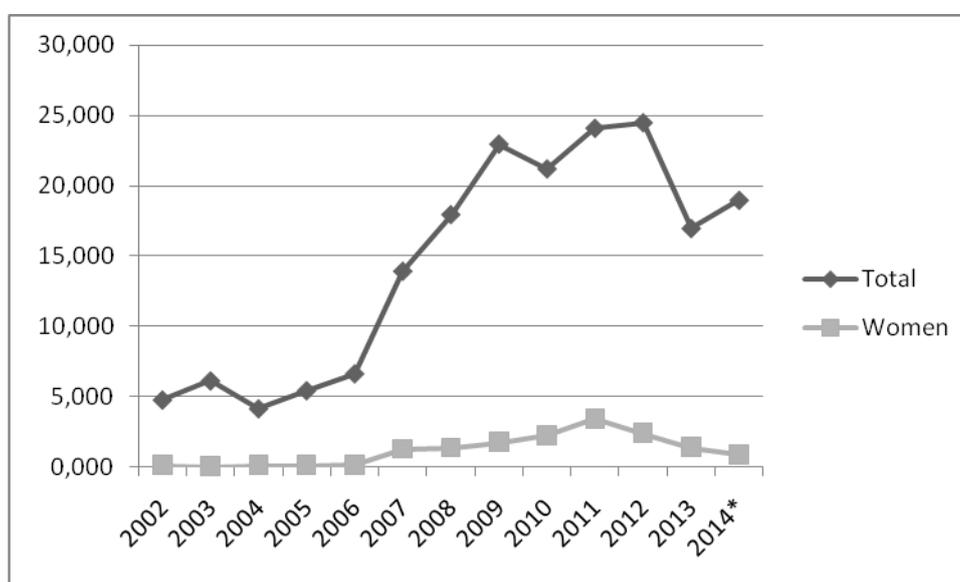
Source: National Statistical Service of Greece[8]

As for those Pakistani migrants who reside in Greece and their demographic characteristics, we first of all have to note the striking gender imbalance already mentioned in the introduction: in fact, according to the 2011 census 96 per cent of the Pakistanis residing in Greece were men. There are a

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[7] According to the Labour Force Survey, see Graph 4.

[8] Labour Force Survey (4th trimester of 2002-2013 and 2nd trimester of 2014).

number of reasons that can account for that. First of all, due to Pakistan's 'culture of migration' men are the ones traditionally embarking on such an endeavor (Lazarescu & Broersma, 2010), while the labour force participation rate for Pakistani women remains rather low,[9] suggesting that any female migration would most likely be linked to family purposes. In addition, Pakistani migrants are only willing to bring their family members to Greece if they are able to do so in a legal manner (Lazarescu & Broersma, 2010) which is, of course, not an option for those who stay in the country undocumented or under the status of asylum seekers. Furthermore the procedure of issuing a visa for family reunification appears to be excessively lengthily and expensive (Interview 1, Interview 2 and Interview 3). Finally, the majority (58%) of the Pakistanis residing in Greece are single and thus do not have families to reunite with.

According to the 2001 census, the vast majority (75%) of Pakistanis' in Greece belongs to the most active age groups, between 20 and 39 years of age. With regards to their educational level, over 80 per cent of them have an education that is lower than upper secondary. This does not come as a surprise given the country's secondary school enrolment and attendance rates.[10] What could account for these low rates of participation in the education system seems to be the fact that attendance to public schools causes the parents a significant economic burden, while even primary school is not compulsory, generating, on the one hand, steep inequalities between families of higher incomes who are able to educate their children and those who do not have the means to do so and, on the other, inequalities within families, not only with regards to gender but also due the fact that the existence of a high number of siblings reduces their chances of receiving a proper education (Sathar & Lloyd, 1994 and Sawada & Lokshin, 2001).

4.1 Settlement and employment

Settling down in the new destination country would have been impossible without the existence of social networks: all interviews reflect the primary role played by the social capital in the migrants' first period of stay in Greece, as the existence of networks provides them access to valuable information and support, including accommodation and employment.

> *Interviewer: In Athens, when you arrived, did you have someone here? A friend or a relative?*
> *Interpreter: He had a friend over here. .*
> *Interviewer: And in the beginning did your friend help you? Did you stay with him?*
> *Interpreter: Yes, he says, my friend helped me for the house, for cloths, for food.* (Sameer, 30 years old)

Those of our interviewees – very few- who did not have established networks in Greece have faced great difficulties upon their arrival and, as in the case of Waqas, concentrated their efforts in developing such networks among their compatriots residing in the country, as the only resource that would enable them survive.

> *Interviewer: And what did you do?*
> *Interpreter: He stayed in the square, two days, three, then he found a guy.*
> *Interviewer: Which square?*

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[9] According to an ILO (2013) report on the labour market of Pakistan women's participation rate was under 25%, while that of men exceeded 80%.

[10] According to the UNICEF statistics on Pakistan they are 39.7 and 34.6 respectively, for male students, available at: http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/pakistan_pakistan_statistics.html

Interpreter: Larisis Station[11]. There he found a guy and he went with him. Not an acquaintance nor a friend.
*Interviewer: And did he help you at all to look for work?*
Interpreter: He says, two months he kept me at his house and gave me food, (phone) cards and such things and then we found work. After two months. (Waqas, 29 years old)

Yet, social capital does not always fulfill the expectation of its holders. In many cases the information of our interviewees were false or outdated, they did not receive the support they had anticipated in their search for accommodation and employment and some have even been misled and exploited: this is the case of Farooq, who had initially migrated to Dubai in order to provide for his family and while he was back in Pakistan on holidays was convinced by a friend who was a smuggler that he would gain much more if he migrated to Greece. As it turned out he paid 4,000 for his transportation and upon his arrival there was a job waiting for him, but he did remain unpaid for three months, until he quit. His was not the only case of such unfulfilled expectations: there have been also others among our interviewees, who were also given employment by the smugglers who arranged their journey to Greece under slavery-like conditions:

"*The one who brought, the agent, stayed with his brother and he send him to a village to work over there, to collect fruit. (…)There where he worked he tells the supervisor that was over there, to take 5 Euros to make a phone call to my family to tell them I am all right, I have arrived, I don't know, and he says we don't give money, we give food and only to work. There isn't, there isn't money.*" (Tariq, 19 years old)

Even in those cases, however, the ways migrants deploy so as to move forward and change their plight is to develop new social networks in Greece that would enable them to find accommodation and work.

Graph 2: Pakistani citizens residing in Greece by sector of employment
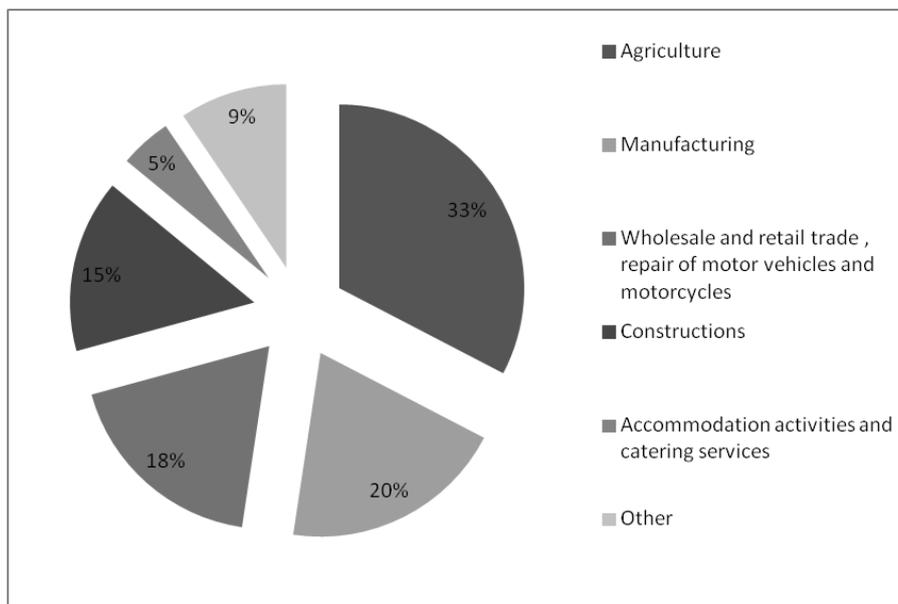
Source: National Statistical Service of Greece, Census 2011[12]

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[11] Larisis Station is Athens' main train station.

[12] Available at: http://www.statistics.gr/

Moving now to the actual sectors in which Pakistani migrants are employed, based on the data of the 2011 census, the main among these are agriculture, manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles and constructions. Migrants are thus mainly occupied as manual laborers, accepting jobs Greeks are no longer interested in, as these involve hard-working conditions including long hours, low earnings and social and physical isolation (Leghari, 2009). In addition, recent research reveals that many newcomers are also working as street vendors, mostly in the main streets of Athens (Yousef, 2013).

Regarding the employment of irregular migrants, it would be helpful at this point to observe that, as it has been stated in relevant literature, while on the policy level measures can be taken against irregular migration, 'as long as labour markets continue to generate a demand for migrant workers, the effectiveness of such controls seems to be limited' (Castles, de Haas & Miller, 2014: 325). Greece, as well as other Southern European countries, became attractive destinations for populations from Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe as they were more easily accessible in comparison to Western European countries, while being at the same time more tolerant towards informal economic activities-especially during a period when the EU's immigration regime had started to become increasingly more rigid. Yet it seems that the recent economic crisis has overturned this for a combination of different reasons; what is happening currently is that, on the one hand, the Greek labour market is shrinking, while, on the other, control measures are gradually intensifying. As a result, the economic crisis appears as having severely reduced the opportunities of employment for Pakistanis. According to the data of the recent census 30 per cent of the Pakistanis residing in Greece were unemployed in 2011. This is in line with the findings of this research, as a surprisingly large proportion of the migrants interviewed were unemployed at the time of the interview, while others were only working occasionally as day labourers,[13] which barely covers their cost of living. In addition, even among those working, we came across migrants, who at times worked as street vendors selling CDs or other items, which according to them stopped being profitable during the crisis, or as gathering and selling metal scrap, which merely provided them with an income of 5 Euros per day.

4.2 Control policies

During the last few years Greece has implemented a series of measures aimed at controlling irregular migration both at the border and within the country including increasing police presence in border areas, strengthening the controls at the points of exit, intensifying the controls within the country, as well as creating pre-departure detention centers and extending the maximum detention time of undocumented migrants to 18 months (Triandafyllidou et al., 2014). For instance, the Greek Ministry of Citizen Protection launched two large-scale operations (mentioned also above): operation 'Xenios Zeus', later replaced by operation 'Theseus': these aimed at apprehending undocumented migrants, targeting mainly public spaces where immigrants are likely to gather, such as the centre of Athens and other major cities including the most important port cities that serve as entry points in the country.

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[13] They were working up to 10 days per months doing any job that they could find either through their networks or by frequenting specific places where employers pick up day labourers.

Table 1: Pakistani citizens apprehended and deported (2009-2014)

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Apprehensions	4854	8830	19975	11136	3982	3269
Deportations[14]	245	405	1293	5135	4833	3287

Source: Hellenic Police[15]

In any case, police identifications were commonplace as a deterrent measure long before the intensification of migration controls adopted during the last few years. What has changed is that this kind of control is now much more frequent in smaller cities of the country, as well, and of course the implications this has had on the migrants. In the past, when an undocumented third-country national was apprehended he/she would be released within days or maybe hours. Yet, since the maximum detention time was increased to 18 months and placement in pre-departure detention facilities for those who were considered removable became the norm, the situation changed dramatically. As Bilal describes:

> *"I have (been) caught many time (by) the police, they let me go. (…) Two-three hours, then leave. (…) Now they catch, if they catch now 16 months is in. A year ago they caught me every day and let (me) go. Now they haven't caught me." (*Bilal, 17 years old)

Bilal adds that he has not been caught, as he has been very careful since the control policies became more rigid. This has been the case for most of his compatriots who try to minimize their exposure to places, where they are likely to be controlled. A similar behavior is described by Ali who has never been intercepted by the police in the four years he had lived in the country:

> *"Interviewer: With the police? Since you crossed the border, up to now, have you ever been controlled?*
> *Translator: He says he hasn't, ever, anywhere. No, it hasn't happened anywhere.*
> *Interviewer: How did you manage?*
> *Ali: I don't walk around much, only work…*
> *Translator: Where he works he lives, do I know? Now that he has come here[16]he came to pick up something and he will go straight home again."* (Ali, 25 years old)

4.3 Migration and asylum management

As stated above, since the ratification of the first Greek migration law in 1991, the only way for a foreign worker to legally enter the country and acquire a residence permit with the purpose of employment is through invitation procedure ('metaklisi'). This does not longer correspond to the country's changing labour market and the sectors where immigrants are usually employed, as it

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[14] We should point out that in these tables are included third country nationals who were deported either by forced (except for repatriations) or voluntary returns (executed by DOM and the Greek Police).

[15] http://www.astynomia.gr/

[16] At the place of the interview, which was a coffee shop in the area of Kolonos, in the center of Athens.

entails a rather complex and time-consuming procedure, which allows immigrants to work in Greece for a specific employer and for a specific type of work (Triandafyllidou et al., 2014). 'Metaklisi' thus is no longer a realistic way of accessing the status of legality in the country.

Graph 3: Residence permits of Pakistani citizens by type (2005-2013)[17]
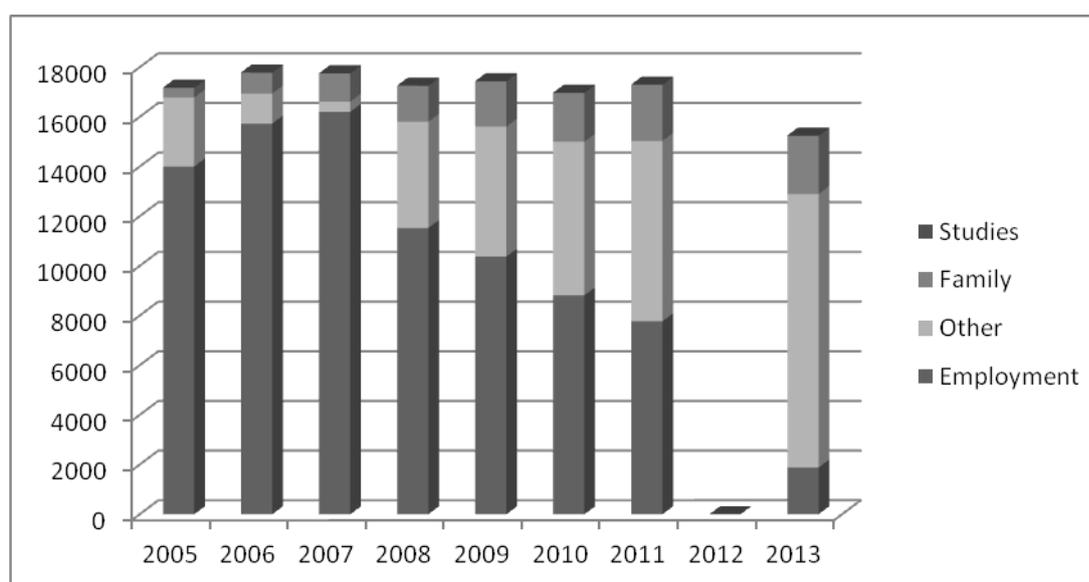

Source: Ministry of Interior Affairs

In addition to this, Greece has implemented a series of regularisation programs between 1998 and 2005 allowing undocumented migrants who entered the country in specific periods to regularise their status. Some scholars suggest that the existence of such regularisation programmes acted as a 'pull factor' for (irregular) migrants (Levinson, 2005 and Leghari, 2009); this might be indeed the case for very few of our interviewees who entered the country near 2005. For instance, one of our interviewees did manage to acquire a regular status through the 2005 regularisation programme, but after a short period of time lost it, as he was unable to collect the necessary insurance stamps in order to renew his permit. Some of the migrants interviewed arrived after 2005 and were, thus, not eligible to apply for regularisation, while others, like Ibrahim who entered Greece in 2004, did not manage to acquire the necessary documents in order to apply.

"When I came I was little, I was 18 years old and my embassy did not give me a passport, because I was little and it was asking me to many papers, so I couldn't find them, that's why until I searched[18] they finished the law and I couldn't issue papers. From there and on it hasn't come yet. From 2005 until now a law hasn't come to issue papers (...) I wait to find normally my papers. Me to become legal. The only thing for many foreigners is that they don't have papers. It[19] must come out, everyone wants to become legal here, but they don't give. The state does not give papers. It does not pass a law." (Ibrahim, 28 years old)

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[17] The number refers to permits in force on the 31th of December of each year.

[18] For the needed documents in order to issue a passport.

[19] The regularization law.

Graph 4: Asylum applications by Pakistani citizens in Greece (**2005-2014**[20])
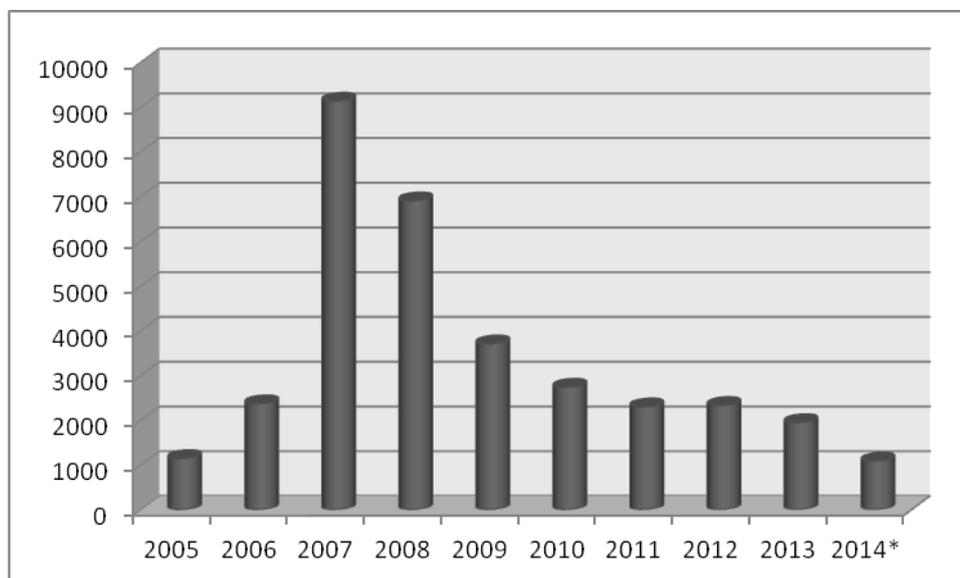
Source: UNHCR Population Statistics[21]and Ministry of Citizen Protection[22]

The majority of our interviewees entered the country after 2005 and thus did not have the opportunity to access the regularisation programs. According to their narratives, one of the main alternative strategies employed so as to acquire a legal status within the country, even if for a short period of time, was applying for asylum. In fact, in the end of 2013, when the New Asylum Service started operating, over 14,000 asylum requests by Pakistani migrants were pending. To set the background, it should be mentioned that the asylum system that was in place in the country until early 2013 has been described by international rights associations as highly bureaucratic and hugely problematic (Human Rights Watch, 2012): the headquarters of the Alien Police Division in Athens, the so-called 'Petrou Ralli', were under-staffed, application processing was slow and delayed selection, which in most cases was considered as arbitrary, while the actual numbers lodged every week were few and the applications pending numerous. Apart from abusing the rights of asylum seekers, this system obliged those wishing to legalize their status to remain trapped in a situation, in which their application was not rejected or approved their application, but their irregularity prolonged. Zahoor, for instance, applied for asylum back in 2007, after queuing for many hours outside Petrou Ralli, he was accepted and interviewed by the authorities and given the 'pink card' that he keeps renewing since. But his application has not yet been examined:

"Now they told me (at Petrou Ralli) you will wait and we don't know what will happen with you, in two months, three months, we don't know, now three months have passed, and I have heard

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[20] The data for 2014 refer to the period between 01.01.2014 and 31.08.2014 and were available from the website of the Ministry of Citizen Protection

[21] Available from: http://popstats.unhcr.org/

[22] Available from:

http://www.yptp.gr/images/stories//2014/asylo/13092014GreekAsylumServiceStatisticalData_Jan14-August14_gr.pdf

nothing. They do not detain you; they do not leave you free, I don't know, they know, I cannot know" (Zahoor, 26 years old)

Pakistani migrants, thus, have strategically employed the process of asylum application, also termed as the 'pink card', since this has been considered a good temporary solution that enabled individuals to circulate freely within the country by exploiting the slow rate of application. Immigrants are informed of this alternative option from their social networks and upon their arrival in the country. Yet, it should be emphasized that all interviewees pointed out the insurmountable difficulties entailed in the procedure that must be followed. Many among them, as in the case of Sameer, despite their consistent efforts and not due to the lack of relevant information, did not manage to acquire not even the so-called 'pink card':

"I have been many times, I have tried to issue papers but then it had too many people and I couldn't issue, every day they were taking 20 persons, 40 persons and thousands of persons were gathering there. That's why I couldn't issue. And then they had no law. They don't give, and still they don't give pink card. Those who have taken all right, every six months they go, they renew, new ones don't take now." (Sameer, 30 years old)

All interviewees that narrate their experience from Petrou Ralli testify to the absurdity of the asylum system, further adding that it has been impossible to wait for so many hours and queuing with the risk of missing their jobs, while at the same time no information or help whatsoever was offered to them on the process they had to follow. Another point stressed of interest by the majority of respondents is the primary role played by the lawyers in their attempt to access the 'Petrou Ralli' procedure and in their intercourse with the asylum system in the country in general. Tahir, who has been interviewed in a detention centre, has been living in Greece for 9 years; after repeatedly renewing his pink card, he failed to do so and he tried to solve his irregularity problem by resorting to the aid of lawyers:

"In order not to lose my job and not to return back, as I learned that they would force me to return (if he got caught), I went to a lawyer in Corfu, he took me a thousand euros, he did nothing. Then a girl lawyer, she took from me 450 euros, nothing, then, while I was here, in Amygdaleza, I spoke with a lawyer, he told me 1.200 euros, we gave him 700, and he took it all from us doing nothing at the end. You know". (Tahir, 27 years old)

Throughout most of the interviews, it becomes evident that lawyers make use of the bureaucratic asylum procedure and problematic migration system so as to gain money, by exploiting the fact that irregular migrants do not speak Greek and cannot have sufficient information on how things proceed in the country. At the same time, many among the interviewees testify to have been deceived by lawyers and not being able afterwards to reclaim the amount of money paid so as to proceed with their applications. It seems as lawyers have created a kind of network within the country, and especially in the centre of Athens, similar to that of the smugglers at the borders of the country, which enables migrants to access information and services that are not available through more legal and official means. Both representatives from the Pakistani associations emphasize the ways lawyers are making use of irregular migrants asking for money: in many cases, these networks appear as corrupted trying to mislead individuals from Pakistan (Interview 1 and Interview 3).

5. The decision to remain, return or re-migrate

In this section we are going to examine our interviewees' plans for the future, either expressed or already put forward, shaped by a combination of structural factors, such as Greece's policies, economic reasons related with the labour market in the country, cultural traditions and issues concerning individual subjectivities. Three are the main options as emerging from the fieldwork: returning to Pakistan; attempting to migrate to other European destinations and remaining in Greece despite the adversities encountered.

5.1 Going back

According to Cassarino (2004), return to the country of origin can be divided into three broad categories based on the level of preparedness of the return migrant: a high level of preparedness, a low level of preparedness and a lack of preparedness. The level of preparedness depends on the willingness and readiness to return, thus in order to achieve a high level of preparedness the return decision must be the result of free choice, accompanied by adequate resources and information about the conditions in the country of origin (Cassarino, 2004). To begin with, there are very few respondents, who decided to return to their country of origin after achieving a level of preparedness for a successful return. Theirs remains a marginal case, as the majority of the interviewees appear as forced to return due to either the high rates of unemployment or the control policy of detention that has been recently been adopted by the Greek state.

The increasing unemployment prevailing during the last few years in the country led thus many to reconsider their options and ponder upon migration to other European countries or return to Pakistan. The main constrain remains, of course, economical, due to the money that needs to be further invested in the case of re-migration and the money that have been already invested in the case of returning back. As Kashif and Shahid describe:

"*To see, one year, to see if it will happen to find any work, all right, I will work, otherwise I will go back (…) My parents tell me I have to go back but I am thinking what I have paid, at least to make something of those I have taken, at least to repay the loan.*" (Kashif, 20 years old)

"*No I'm thinking more to leave from here, and then I will see what to do over there[23]. Since I left because for jobs, there, there are none and here I found even worst. And to go back and to see what I will do.*" (Shahid, 23years old)

The current bleak situation dominating the labour market in Greece generates thus a high number of returns and the decrease of remittances received by the families of those remaining in Greece, as many migrants have been unable to send money home for long periods. This is how the lack of unemployment opportunities in the country appears to become known to Pakistani prospective migrants back in their country. In fact, when asked whether they receive inquiries about migration in Greece from friends and family members back in Pakistan most respond that this is no longer the case as people are aware of the conditions prevailing in Greece, yet even if their compatriots did raise this question, irregular migrants would advise them not to come.

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[23] In Pakistan

The extension of the control measure of detention emerges as a central reason leading to the decision to return. This measure can be considered as both an internal and an external immigration policy (Hatziprokopiou & Triandafyllidou, 2013) as, according to Greece's National Action Plan on Asylum and Migration Management, it aims at increasing the return of irregular immigrants who are already in the country as well as deterring future irregular entries (Triandafyllidou & Angeli, 2014). In the case of Pakistani migrants the extension of detention appears to have achieved its purpose when combined with the intensification of controls within the borders of the country.[24] Four of our interviewees who have applied for return using the IOM Assisted Voluntary Return program were detained in Amygdaleza when they decided to do so. Their rationale was simple, being detained meant that they would not be able to work and thus send remittances to their families and earn a living themselves for an unknown period of 18 months or even more; signing up for a voluntary return program, thus, seemed like the only viable option. As Sufian explains:

> *"I have made the application,[25] if they will send me back. If they let me free here I will not go back, due to economics, I cannot do something there to help my family. It is hard for me there and if they will let me free over here I will go work, to send some money so as to get by (…) I thought here where I am in here I cannot do something for my family, for my wife, for my children, (it's) better to leave from here, where I will stay here 18 months, 2 years, I don't know how long they will keep me in here. (It's) better to make the application and leave back, to be next to my wife, to my children, to my family."* (Sufian, 30 years old)

At this point we mast state that the fact that in the case of Pakistani migrants this policy appears as having fulfilled its purpose does not render it a successful policy. Triandafyllidou, Angeli and Dimitriadi (2014) have noted that the measure of detention as adopted and implemented by the Greek state during the last few years cannot be considered effective and sustainable, as it is not legally viable and may lead Greece to new court convictions; moreover, it entails a heavily charged political burden while at the same time involving a high financial investment and leading to outcomes that are in most cases uncertain. As this report is being written, Amygdaleza - perhaps Greece's most infamous detention centre - has started emptying, as there appears to be a gradual shift in migration policy by the newly elected left-wing government of SYRIZA.[26] In February 2015, the newly appointed Deputy Minister of Citizen Protection, Yannis Panousis, visited the pre-departure centre of Amygdaleza after the suicide of a young Pakistani detainee pledging to close this particular centre down while gradually transforming other detention centres to open accommodation structures.[27]

When examining irregular migration in Greece, however, one cannot overlook the fact that anti-migrant rhetoric and racist violence have been transformed into an everyday phenomenon over the past years in the country. Third-country nationals, including asylum seekers, refugees and irregular migrants have been victims of attacks mainly by members of extreme-right wing groups, such as the neo-Nazi political party Golden Dawn that entered the national parliament in 2012. The massive increase of attacks against migrants has been inadequately dealt by the police, judiciary and national authorities, as reported by national and international NGOs and human rights groups; for instance, there has never been a conviction for a racially motivated crime in the country (Triandafyllidou & Kouki, 2015).The majority of victims of racist violence choose not to report their case to the authorities not only as many among them are undocumented and thus afraid of the repercussions, but because

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[24] With regards to the aims of the policy beyond the Greek borders, as already mentioned, Greece is no longer considered an attractive destination for Pakistani migrants.

[25] For the IOM Assisted Voluntary Return program.

[26] See: http://www.kathimerini.gr/804882/article/epikairothta/ellada/anoi3an-oi-pyles-e3odoy-sto-kentro-krathshs-amygdalezas

[27] See: http://www.tanea.gr/news/greece/article/5209793/panoyshs-gia-amygdaleza-tha-lygize-kai-o-xeiroteros-ratsisths/

public officials are among the most frequently reported alleged perpetrator groups and there is evidence of collusion between the police and Golden Dawn (Human Rights Watch, 2012). Victims are discouraged by the general climate of impunity for the perpetrators of racist attacks, but also by the mainstreaming of xenophobia and racism and the scapegoating of migrants during an era of acute crisis for the native populace. The Pakistani community is often targeted by racist attacks and has reacted in a number of ways including the participation in marches and demonstrations of antiracist initiatives (Yousef, 2013).

Having described the rise of racism as the background against which irregular migrants were interviewed for this research, we should not fail to mention, however, that racist attacks did not come up during the interviews as factors influencing the decision-making process to migrate or return. Nevertheless, fieldwork started taking place (September 2013) approximately when Pavlos Fyssas, a Greek anti-fascist musician, was murdered by a member of Golden Dawn: many of the Pakistanis interviewed commented that it took the murder of a Greek person for the police and justice to finally react to the far-right violence. This can be even more easily understood, as, in the beginning of the same year a young Pakistani national, Shehzad Luqman, was murdered allegedly due to racist motivations and sadly that act did not attract the same attention by the media and public and reaction by authorities and the judiciary. One of our interviewees, Farid, was contacted almost one year after the initial interview via Skype; he commented that he returned to Pakistan in September 2014 mainly for economic reasons, as he lost his job in Greece, yet it was an incident of racist violence about a month before he left that acted as a catalyst.

5.2 Moving Forward

Few among our interviewees are considering the possibility of migrating to another European country so as to enjoy more employment opportunities than those available in Greece.

> *"I'm thinking, if I will find a better job I will work here, otherwise I will leave to another place. (…) If I don't find a better job to go Italy, Germany, towards there, not back"* (Sameer, 30 years old)

The factor that emerges from the interviews as attracting individuals to move to another country is their conviction that in this case they would be given the opportunity to regularize their residence status and circulate and work legally in their new destination. In this respect, the countries that are usually mentioned are Italy, Spain and Germany, while the information respondents have on those destinations are once again surprisingly partial, outdated or false. Subhan, for instance, appears convinced that if he manages to arrive to Germany he will easily receive a refugee status:

> Interviewer: *What have you heard about Germany?*
> Subhan: *I have my friend there Germany, I have heard that there I can get easily political asylum, I can stay better there.*
> Interviewer: *Do you think it is indeed easy to get political asylum there? Do you have some reason for saying that?*
> Subhan: *With Greece it is very much easy to get there political asylum.*
> Interviewer: *Do you have a reason for doing that, to say that for that reason I am afraid to go back to Pakistan?*
> Subhan: *I have no fear, I just don't want to go back. I want to go to Europe. Europe, forwards. Germany, Italy.* (Subhan, 23 years old)

What appears as the main obstacle in embarking on such an endeavor is, of course, the financial cost it entails, which amounts to 2,000 Euros approximately, a significant sum for someone who has spent a considerable amount of money to arrive to Greece and, adding further to this, a period during which he was unemployed. With regards to the exit routes used in moving to another destination, the dominant journey is still through the ports of Patras and Igoumenitsa to Italy;[28] Western Balkans, though, are increasingly appearing in the news and in reports released by Frontex (2014) as an alternative route, as it is also verified by some of the respondents.

5.3 Remaining in Greece

What appears interesting when trying to decipher the decision-making processes followed by irregular migrants, however, is to examine not why Pakistanis might wish to return, but why some of them choose not to return, even those who were interviewed while being detained. For some returning back to their country of origin is simply not an option, as they either believe their life would be in danger if they go back, or they have not been able to earn the money they have invested in their migration venture and thus cannot take this decision or realize such a journey. After having worked for two years in Pakistan, Naeem came to Greece when he was 17 years old in order to help his family financially, as the money he was earning until then was not sufficient to cover his family's needs. In order to collect the 6,000 euros needed to be paid to the smuggler for his journey to Greece, Naeem's family sold a piece of land and borrowed money from relatives. He was apprehended soon after his arrival to Greece. When asked whether he is considering returning he responded:

"Since I borrowed (money) to pay that I came here how will I pay (it back) if I will go back? I have to get out here, to work, to pay the debts that I have and then (I can go back)." (Naeem, 19 years old)

The same rationale has often been provided by respondents who are not detained, but have been unable to find work for long periods of time. Notwithstanding the great financial burden associated with the decision to go back, one has to understand this frame of mind within the historical, social, cultural and political context of Pakistan, where the decision to migrate has been originally taken. The process of migration has a specific social and economic value, as noted above, but it is also especially related with young men and their passage from childhood to adulthood. Seen this way, the act of returning back earlier than planned, especially by being deported or returned through state plans, in many cases is not an option, even if at first glance it seems a most rational solution to a non-manageable stay in the country, or even prolonged detention. On the one hand, the factors that may have caused the original migration, including fear of persecution, poverty, insecurity, lack of employment, are still there; in addition, going back may appear as a personal failure and lead to stigmatization, also due to family commitments or debt (Schuster and Majidi, 2015).

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[28] According to data provided by the Hellenic Police 293 Pakistanis were apprehended trying to cross the Greek-Italian sea borders in 2011 and 595 in 2012.

6. Conclusion

Even if it is seldom stated explicitly, however, in most cases literature treats migration as the outcome of rational and conscious strategies that aim at maximizing the gains of the individual and the household to which he/she belongs, while at the same time reducing risks entailed in the process. Interpretative frameworks, such as the 'push-pull' theory, that draw from rational choice argumentation to explain individuals' decision to migrate have been challenged since the 1960s by other, broader and multi-level analyses - as the 'world systems theory' (Arango, 2000). Within the same context, return migration seen as either success or failure has been also problematized in recent literature (de Haas et al., 2015). However, economic reductionism remains still the inevitable background against which motivations are examined, not only in terms of public understandings but also academic literature, including those cases where socio-cultural factors are taken into account (Ahmad, 2008: 129).

It is within this context that the Pakistanis' migration to Greece during the last few years leaves open as many questions as it answers. In many cases it is proved complicated to comprehend the decision-making process that leads individuals from Pakistan to embark upon such a difficult project as migrating to Greece: to begin with, this involves the spending of a sum of cash that is most probably greater than the annual household income; at the same time, the role and the demands of the smuggler are not contested or criticized, on the contrary are taken for granted; this is the case also for the 'irregularity' embedded in the very process of migrating which obliges individuals to go through a risk entailing journey in order to arrive at their destination, a trip that may last for many months or even years. At the same time, what emerges as surprising throughout the interviews conducted is the remarkable lack of information on the above complexities on behalf of the migrants embarking upon this project. Most, if not all of them, were highly unaware of border checks and control policies within the country, of the current intensification of control measures, of the legalization programs once in use and the current lack of them, of the asylum system workings and the complexities entailed in gaining and renewing a pink card and of any employment opportunities in general. It seems as having sound information on how entry is achieved, legality is gained and life is experienced in the country was not as important as one would expect in the decision making process. Most of them have had wrong or outdated information, either through their social networks or the smuggler that facilitated them. However, the hardships encountered (also) due to such insufficient or not well-grounded knowledge do not seem to challenge the process through which this information has been received due to social networks. The vast majority of those interviewed, thus, have encountered huge obstacles in meeting up, not only their expectations about sending back remittances or living a different life in Europe, but with merely surviving; many cannot return due to the fact that the debt has not been yet paid; still, it is surprising that many among them do not articulate an explicit desire to return back. All in all, if a 'cost/ benefit' or 'push/ pull' factor analysis was to be applied to the above findings, then hardly any clear-cut conclusions would be drawn to justify the mortal risks entailed in irregular migration.

This might be the case due to our misplaced predisposition when asking 'why' someone migrates from Pakistan to Greece: in all cases it is implied that leaving home cannot but be the ultimate solution to unresolved problems. This is consistent with mainstream accounts of economic history examining developing societies and/or communities of the poor and how they survive (Ahmad, 2008: 134). Those interpretative lenses make decision-making in the case under question appear a little rational procedure, while the impact of individuals' agency upon structure remains largely unclear. However, migrants' impulses to migrate are often generated in various spheres beyond the mere economic of the household and in relation with given localities and the social context emerging as the product of a multiplicity of reasons, more or less rational, calculated and contingent. For instance, as noted above, the information migrants have on the country of destination in most cases does not concern issues that literature would evaluate as crucial, such as those concerning borders'

control, legalization opportunities, and labour conditions; what is important for individuals is that Greece seems a country where their aspirations could be somehow realized. Based on this vague picture, they and their families are keen to pay huge smuggling rates to 'purchase' irregular migration. In order to shed some light to this experiencing of migration, it might be useful to shift our emphasis towards other directions than, for instance, the cost/benefit rationale: On the one hand, it should be taken into account that Pakistan men grow up in a country, where transnational experiences of migration are a socially embedded and widely shared normality: their fathers, brothers, friends or neighbours have lived or are living and working abroad. Migration is like a 'rite of passage', a pathway to a more economically and socially independent lifestyle (Punch, 2007: 4) in various cultural contexts: Gardner (2009) argues that young men from Sylhet in Bangladesh are willing to migrate in Britain to find work in Indian restaurants also because 'movement abroad is linked to the construction of an active, adult male hood'. In the same vein, Punch (2007) notes that young Bolivians leave to work in Argentina partly to pursue the enhanced status of a migrant identity. Or, in the case of Afghans, migration can be understood as a necessary phase in their life course, 'a rite of passage to adulthood and a step toward manhood' (Monsutti, 2007). For Pakistani men it can be seen as a necessary stage during which they have to accumulate the money, freedom and the status required so as to return, get married and experience, thus, a masculine identity (Ahmad, 2008). Within this context, returning back or being deported may not be an option, even if at first glance it seems an inevitable solution: in addition to the factors that may have caused the original migration (including fear of persecution, poverty, insecurity, lack of employment), going back may appear as a personal failure and lead to stigmatization, also due to family commitments or debt (Schuster and Majidi, 2015). Autonomy, gender or adulthood are interrelated with the economic well-being of the household, the lack of survival opportunities at home, and the need to go abroad: the reasons that influence the decision making cannot easily be classified as 'economic' versus 'cultural', 'collective' versus 'individual'.

Mainstream theories of migration have been often criticized on the grounds that they downplay cultural factors reducing the determinants of migration to economic reasons while treating sending societies as if they were homogeneous, static and 'in the lack of' what the destination countries cherish (Monsutti ,2007). To our understanding, assumptions about migrant rationality are proved unhelpful in better understanding the decision-making of migrants and the factors involved in the governance of irregular migration. It is in this respect that the Pakistanis' case is proved a valuable case concerning researchers' and policymakers' efforts to explain and deal with irregular migration in the country's turbulent current context. Throughout the interviews conducted for this report, the distinction between legal or illegal migration is fluid and changeable and certainly not quintessential for decision-making; migration is not just labour migration and the interplay between agency and structure is not clear cut. Migrants are not victims or objects of contemporary domination or global inequality, as it is in many cases assumed; but looking for their agency should either lead us to assume that actors step out of their context and history and become able to decide to migrate with interpretative tools and skills borrowed from another context that would attach to migration different meanings and values. Migrants' agency acquires its rationality due to the social relations, historical traditions and cultural and political milieu they experience and the structural determinants of global but also local realities. Within this context, the 'illegality', criminalization, life risks and detention prospects associated with irregular migration are not deterring men from Pakistan from arriving to Greece, but direct them to different migratory paths and survival techniques. As a result, increased control policies, such as fences, border deterrence or policing in the cities are not pushing them away, but put their life into increased danger, while legalization obstacles and detention measures impede them from working while prolonging their stay in the country. Bearing in mind the above remarks, it seems that a better understanding of the actors and factors involved in irregular migration is achieved, both in terms of research and policy making, by posing different questions and treating different migrant groups in different ways.

7. References

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8. Annexes

Annex I: List of interviews with authorities and stakeholders in Greece

Interview Number	Stakeholders in Greece	Type of communication	Date
1	Pakistani Community of Greece «Unity»	Interview	14.02.2013
2	Pak-Hellenic Cultural and Welfare Society	Interview	18.02.2013
3	Association of Shia Muslims Pakistanis	Interview	3.03.2013
4	Hellenic Police, Directorate of Immigration	Interview	05.04.2013
5	UNHCR	Interview	08.02.2013
6	Greek Council for Refugees	Interview via phone & E-mail response	17.02.2013
7	Hellenic Police, Directorate of Immigration, Operations and Coordination Department	Interview	11.02.2013
8	Hellenic Police, Asylum Department, Directorate of Immigration	Interview	11.02.2013
9	Greek Forum of Migrants	Interview	15.02.2013
10	FRONTEX	Interview	01.02.2013

Annex II: Map of routes