

Session: TRADE, MIGRATION AND URBAN NETWORKS IN EUROPEAN PORT-CITIES (17th- 20th CENTURIES)

Title: Demographic composition and immigration movements of the Port City of Patras during the Interwar Period.

**Panagiotis G. Eliopoulos, doctoral student, University of Athens
peliop@hotmail.com**

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the mechanism of demographic composition of the urban population and the geographic area attraction of the port-city of Patras during the first half of the 20th century. It is placed among the wider research of the social urban history, an area slightly developed in Greece. What titles may exist, are mostly concerned with the 18th and 19th century, but are nevertheless fragmentary since the very capital city of the country is lacking its own history (the only publication available is the monograph of Mr. Biri, city planner, and single articles). Only recently a wider historical program on the history of Athens has launched under the supervision of Prof E. Burnova and the first publications will go to print in the following months.

The 20th century, a period that perhaps has preoccupied Western Europe urban historians less since the urban process has been completed, constitutes nevertheless the great urbanization period for Greece. For our study, we have chosen a major port city that prospered because of its ties to the International Currant market, especially in the second half of the 19th century. The rise and fall of the Patran Currant empire is well known and sufficiently present in the Greek historiography (Fragiadakis, Kalafatis and Pizaniats). The end of this story was written with the currant market crisis, in the early 1890's, when the price plummeted, simultaneously leaving huge quantities of the good unsold and farmers in despair.

But what happened after this is unknown. How did the city, along with the circumambient rural population with its intense economic and social dependence to it, react? When the circumstance ends, what framework is being revealed? What, if any, kind of changes are established? How does the socio-professional structure change? From the above, I will focus on the first query, since the research is still ongoing. Our sources forced us to narrow our expectations to the interwar period, since our most qualitative source, that is, the Register of Patras, only then begins to operate properly with standard methods of recording, as we are going to see later on. Similar papers did not exist for Greece until recently, with the exception of a city that emerged ex nihilo from Asia Minor refugees in 1924, described as a labor city. This is Egaleo¹ in Attica, bordering to Athens.

Sources:

During the 19th century 20 census were run, from 1821 up to 1896. In the 20th century however they become "scientific" and richer in published results. However, the census themselves were not saved, meaning census personal and family cards, and we only have the published results. For this presentation, we are going to use the ones of 1907, 1920, 1928, and 1940. We use 1907 as a starter point, but we use primarily the ones of 1928 and 1940. The census of 1928 is richer in published results, while the

¹ Burnova E., Από τις Νέες Κυδωνίες στο Δήμο Αιγάλεω. Η συγκρότηση μίας πόλης στον 20^ο αιώνα, Δήμος Αιγάλεω & Εκδόσεις Πλέθρον 2002

results of 1940 were never published due to warfare, except general information regarding the total population of every settlement.

Another source we used is the Vital Statistics for which data exist for the periods 1860- 1885 and 1921- 1937. The extracted information can only be used to illustrate the actual population progress as well as the expected population progress of a city, though it cannot give an interpretation on issues concerning population inflow or outflow. Last but not least we used the register archives of Patras after the exhaustive indexing of more than 25000 death certificates, although we experienced difficulties even there. Until 1925 only deaths were recorded and up to 1919 there does not seem to be even a standard system of registration and depending on the thoroughness of each clerk, we may or may not find exact data on a person's place of birth, cause of death etc. The reason behind the uninterruptedly recording of deaths, even with missing data, is that a death certificate from the register was needed in order to get an interment permit. A further reason that has contributed to the full registration of deaths is the legal issue of inheritance, since you have to prove a death before you have your share in the family estate. After 1919, all data becomes available after adopting national register methods.

The big misfortune though seems to be the complete absence of marriage and birth certificates up to 1925, although the legislation had provisioned for the keeping of these records, mostly because of the arrival of the Asia Minor refugees and the need of the state to be able to control the population of the country. It seems that both populace and local authorities had not by that time understood the necessity for such bureaucracy and economic cost, either by failing to declare events, or by not appointing an extra clerk at the Register. There were many who argued against this unacceptable negligence, even among the Vital Statistics officials and I quote: *"Necessary to note, that the old civil acts law had fallen to obsolescence and many liable for birth declaration, neglected to do so, especially in the bigger cities, according to the 2430 civil acts law, voted in 1920 that appoints the declaration as obligatory, did not take effect again this year, while this is not happening for marriages (for the performance of marriage the permit of the ecclesiastical authority is a precondition, the civil marriage is not valid in Greece) and deaths (no interment permit is given before the decease register act)."*² Another piece of under-registration evidence is when in 1925, a marriage department starts to operate in the register, it is mostly widows of civil servants, lawyers and officers who declare their marriage, sometimes dating as back as 1886, just in order to get a pension and almost none had actually taken place in 1925. However with all the weaknesses there may be, these are the only available sources for the urban population composition study since we have no access to the ecclesiastical archives (where all marriages and baptisms are recorded).

² Vital Statistics 1924, page ζ*

Table 1: Population surplus for Patras 1921-1940

| Year | Births according to Register | Births according to Vital Statistics | Deaths according to Register | Population Surplus= Births- Deaths |
|------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1921 | | 1470 | 814 | 656* |
| 1922 | | 1079 | 1127 | -48* |
| 1923 | | 1055 | 1811 | -756* |
| 1924 | | 1200 | 1104 | 96* |
| 1925 | 891 | 1345 | 1187 | -296 |
| 1926 | 1196 | 1400 | 1150 | 46 |
| 1927 | 913 | 962 | 1205 | -292 |
| 1928 | 1200 | 1175 | 1450 | -250 |
| 1929 | 1291 | 1347 | 1260 | 31 |
| 1930 | 2041 | 1651 | 1206 | 835 |
| 1931 | 1888 | 1709 | 1169 | 719 |
| 1932 | 1713 | 1653 | 1209 | 504 |
| 1933 | 1684 | 1635 | 1190 | 494 |
| 1934 | 1815 | 1750 | 1094 | 721 |
| 1935 | 1765 | 1703 | 1138 | 627 |
| 1936 | 1732 | 1699 | 1106 | 626 |
| 1937 | 1669 | 1625 | 1074 | 595 |
| 1938 | 1655 | | 1095 | 560 |
| 1939 | 1652 | | 1091 | 561 |
| 1940 | 1607 | | 1028 | 579 |

Source: Register of Patras, Vital Statistics

* For the period 1921-1924 we used the Vital Statistics estimations on births, since there are no Register records.

On this table we see the number of births recorded at the Register of Patras, as well as the ones estimated by Vital Statistics for the years 1921-1940. Subtracting the number of deaths for the respective years we have the annual population surplus. Since the Register records on births started on 1925, it is logical why there may be cases of underregistration for the first couple of years. From the above, the average annual population increase according to the Register (although we borrow data for the period 1921-1924 from Vital Statistics) is 304. However, from the census taken place from 1920 to 1940 the same figure climbs to 1315. Consequently we understand that $\frac{3}{4}$ of the population increase cannot be explained by the internal reproductive capacities of the city, but by the inflow of people from other regions.

Table 2: Urban Population Composition in 1928 for Patras, Athens, Piraeus

| | Indigenou s | Refugee s | Immigrant s | Total | Indigeno us % | Refugee s % | Immigrant s % |
|---------|----------------|--------------|----------------|--------|------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Athens | 131810 | 129380 | 198021 | 459211 | 28,7 | 28,2 | 31,1 |
| Piraeus | 68859 | 101185 | 81615 | 251659 | 27,6 | 40 | 32,4 |
| Patras | 32376 | 6967 | 25293 | 64636 | 50,1 | 10,8 | 39,1 |

Source: Kayser B., Ανθρωπογεωγραφία της Ελλάδος, ΕΚΚΕ, Αθήνα 1968

Since only one in two who populate the city of Patras was born there, we find ourselves trying to answer the question on where did this people come from and why! It would be rather useful to be also able to tell just when this people come to Patras and when they leave the city (if they do), but this is not possible, since no entrant lists were kept and we are able to talk only for the part of immigrants and refugees who chose to spend their whole life in Patras.

While at the end of the 19th century urban populations showed signs of increased mobility, with Patras having a steady growth, third after Athens and Piraeus, in the next period Patras seems incapable to follow, when the effects of the Currant Crisis, the National bankruptcy and the related international consequences, enforce overseas emigration. Patras the gateway for Greek agricultural produce to the West, is bound by the stagnancy of its proximate and greater surroundings.

Table 3: Population and number of Settlements in the Prefecture of Achaia 1907-1940

| | 1907 | | 1920 | | | 1928 | | | 1940 | | |
|------------------------|------------|--------------------|------------|------------|--------------------|------------|------------|--------------------|------------|------------|--------------------|
| | Population | No. of Settlements | Population | Increase % | No. Of Settlements | Population | Increase % | No. Of Settlements | Population | Increase % | No. of Settlements |
| City of Patras | 37401 | | 51596 | 37,9 5 | | 61278 | 18,7 7 | | 62275 | 1,6 | |
| Municipality of Patras | 51932 | 40 | 53255 | 2,55 | 5 | 66809 | 25,4 5 | 13 | 79570 | 19,1 | 37 |
| Province of Patras | 83478 | | 102978 | 23,3 6 | 249 | 118209 | 14,7 9 | 224 | 139330 | 17,8 7 | 249 |
| Prefecture of Achaia | 15091 8 | | 167435 | 10,9 4 | 401 | 190422 | 13,7 3 | 414 | 222060 | 16,6 1 | 458 |

Source: Census 1907, 1920, 1928, and 1940

This table shows the city's decrescent ability for further growth in the 1920's, since although the city's population growth is 18,77%, it is mostly due to refugees

(something depending on circumstance and not on immigrants conscious economic choice) who by the 1928 census were 6967, representing about 11% of the total Patras population in 1923. Although the city seems to have reached its limits in population growth and expansion, urbanization has not. So instead of dwelling the city itself, the new immigrants choose settlements, close and around it. If we exclude the census of 1920 for which the ever changing administration acts had assigned only 5 villages to the municipality (ΔNZ 1912), we see that the municipality is growing much faster than the city itself and the Province/Prefecture it belongs to. With the following table we are able to further stress this point

Table 4: Municipal Settlements Population Increase 1907-1940

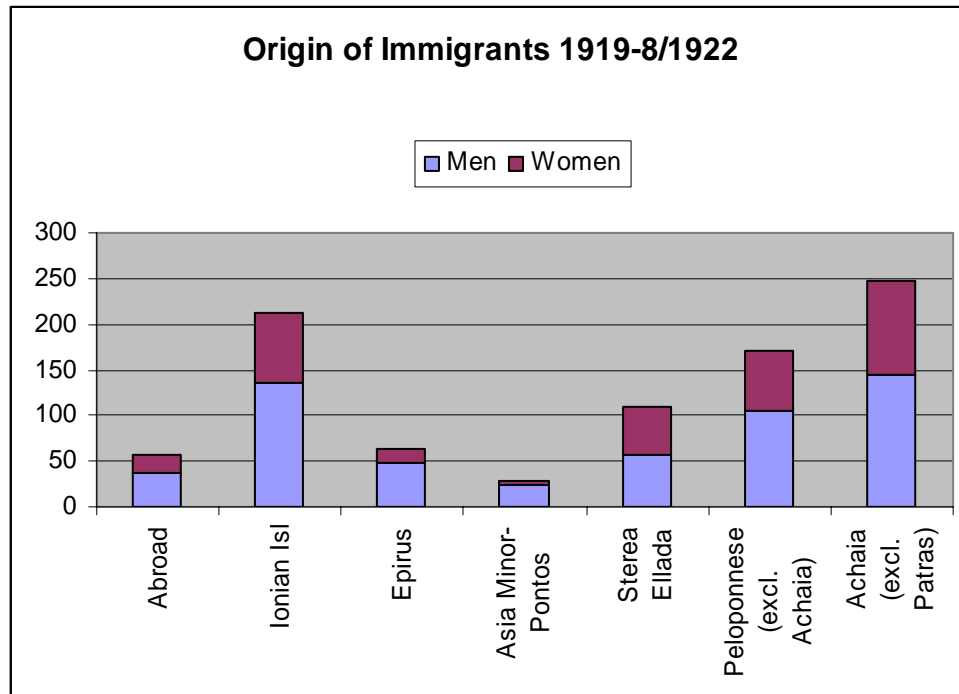
| Municipal settlements | Distance from the city of Patras (Km) | 1907 | 1920 | 1928 | 1940 | Population increase 1907- 1940 % |
|------------------------------|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---|
| City of Patras | | 37401 | 51596 | 61278 | 62275 | 66,51 |
| Vounteni | 20 | 182 | 228 | 266 | 321 | 76,37 |
| Balla | 8.5 | 112 | 132 | 143 | 165 | 47,32 |
| Begoulaki | 7 | 255 | 366 | 510 | 748 | 193,33 |
| Sihena | 5 | 276 | 306 | 573 | 532 | 92,75 |

Source: Census 1907, 1920, 1928, and 1940

Although not all these settlements are close to the city and its port, they are the only settlements consistently found within the municipality boundaries (most of the other shore side villages next to the city, doubled-at least- their population and became big enough to form municipalities of their own later on, although none of them is shown here, not belonging to the municipality in 1920), and we see that their population growth is faster than the city's itself, with the closer settlements showing greater growth.

Since we were able to demonstrate that the demographic boosts were primarily caused by immigration a logical question arises. Where do all these people come from? Is Patras growing on its regional agrarian demographic surpluses, or is it that it has gained much in economic terms, that it attracts its people from the whole of Greece? Is this inflow regional or national? Moreover, does the city attract families, workers of both sexes, or is it just men that will try to blend with the city? Unfortunately, as we mentioned earlier no entrant lists were kept and we are only able to make a rather serious speculation based on the ones that stayed in Patras. The Register gives us this opportunity from the death certificates on which the place of birth is inscribed constantly after 1919. I also found it useful to divide the period into two, since Asia Minor Refugees arriving by the hundreds after September of 1922 seriously affect the image we are trying to create.

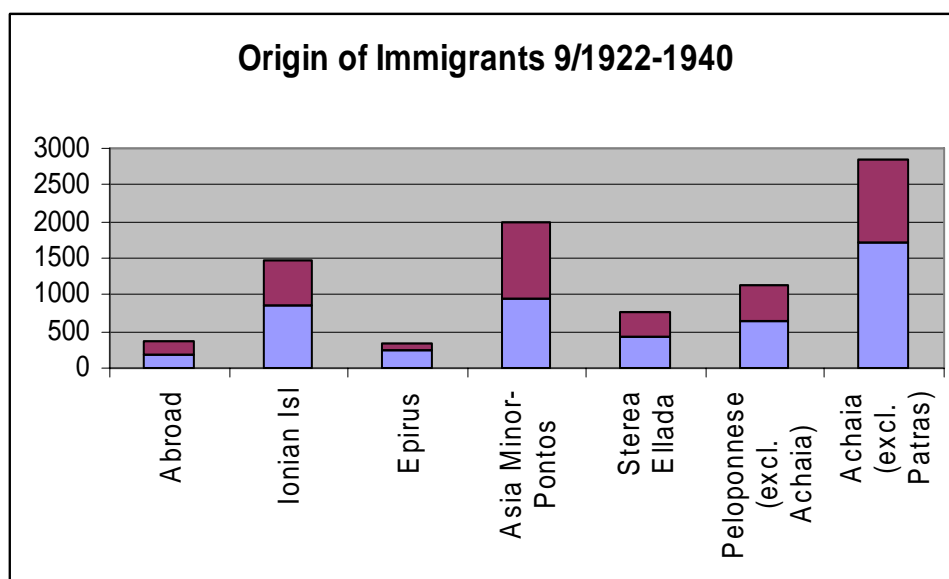
Chart 1:



Source: Death Certificates from the Register of Patras

For this first period, what we see besides the obvious inflow from the Prefecture of Achaia, is the vast number of immigrants coming from the Ionian Islands. Many come from the rest of Continental Greece, mainly the regions of Peloponnese, Sterea Ellada and Epirus. The men- women ratio is 3/1.

Chart 5:



Source: Death Certificates from the Register of Patras

Although Patras did not attract many refugees, compared to Northern Greece, they were enough to turn the tables. They are second, in terms of inflow, only to the Prefecture of Achaia, leaving the Ionian Islands on third place. Patras still partially acts as the demographic safety valve for Peloponnese, Sterea Ellada and Epirus, especially since after 1920 emigration to the United States ceased to be an option. What does change is that the men-women ratio is changing slightly to 5/2.

Table 5: Deaths by Age Groups and place of Birth for the residents of Patras.

| Age Groups | 1919-8/1922 | | | | | | 9/1922-1940 | | | | | |
|------------|----------------|----|----------------|----|-------------------|---|----------------|----|----------------|----|-------------------|----|
| | City of Patras | | Rest of Greece | | Asia Minor/Pontos | | City of Patras | | Rest of Greece | | Asia Minor/Pontos | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| <1 year | 267 | 92 | 16 | 6 | 8 | 3 | 4731 | 92 | 316 | 6 | 107 | 2 |
| 1 to 10 | 87 | 66 | 40 | 30 | 5 | 4 | 2292 | 74 | 380 | 12 | 421 | 14 |
| 11 to 20 | 69 | 47 | 76 | 52 | 2 | 1 | 615 | 55 | 339 | 30 | 158 | 14 |
| 21 to 30 | 78 | 51 | 71 | 46 | 5 | 3 | 604 | 47 | 514 | 40 | 169 | 13 |
| 31 to 40 | 65 | 40 | 95 | 58 | 4 | 2 | 496 | 43 | 498 | 44 | 147 | 13 |
| 41 to 50 | 81 | 43 | 109 | 57 | 0 | 0 | 582 | 43 | 593 | 44 | 170 | 13 |
| 51 to 60 | 96 | 44 | 119 | 55 | 2 | 1 | 770 | 42 | 845 | 46 | 227 | 12 |
| 61 to 70 | 75 | 32 | 158 | 68 | 1 | 0 | 941 | 39 | 1185 | 49 | 269 | 11 |
| 71+ | 127 | 37 | 219 | 63 | 1 | 0 | 1148 | 32 | 2123 | 59 | 322 | 9 |

Source: Death Certificates from the Registry of Patras

With a first glance, we would say that Patras has stopped attracting whole families, especially in the second period, since the percentage for the groups 1-20 years is higher for the children and the young born in the city of Patras. Although part of the percentage given to Patras for the ages <1- 10 years should be children of immigrants born in Patras, the figures suggest that not so many reached Patras in an existent family, even though this does not mean that they did not create a family when they settled in Patras. Further evidence is found on charts 4, 5 showing the low percentage of female immigrants coming to Patras. Asia minor refugees on the other hand, is another case entirely showing persistent percentages for every age group, besides infants and elders who had not survived the journey to Patras, thus showing low percentages. The difficult settlements conditions, as well as the hardships, until they reach Patras took their toll with high mortality rates among the most susceptible groups; children and elders.

The percentages given to Immigrants from the rest of Greece show a steady increase. Does this mean that in an earlier stage of their life, times of prosperity for the Patran currant market, they came to settle, or are there other reasons for this as well? Since Patras was the administrative centre, for Peloponnese, with a high concentration in

physical doctors, could this be that some of these percentages could be the result of patients who came for medical treatment and accidentally passed away in Patras, as many suggest? To this theory I remain skeptic, because without saying that this does not occur, I would say that this has a minimum impact on the general complexion for two reasons. Besides the fact that many of these deaths were not recorded in the Register of Patras (but instead to the one of their homeland's, where they were transferred for the interment and being erased from the Register of Patras before the transfer), the following table would help us clarify the issue.

Table 6: Deaths declared at institutions, by place of birth.

| Institution | 1919- 8/1922 | | | 9/1922- 1940 | | |
|--|----------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------------|
| | City of Patras | Rest of Greece | Asia Minor/ Pontos | City of Patras | Rest of Greece | Asia Minor/ Pontos |
| Municipal Hospital | 37 | 125 | 5 | 799 | 707 | 439 |
| Other Municipal Establishments e.g. almshouse | 14 | 18 | 0 | 110 | 171 | 59 |
| Private clinics | 0 | 35 | 0 | 42 | 168 | 10 |

Source: Death Certificates from the Register of Patras

From the table above, we could say that Patrans generally prefer to have treatment at home, instead of trusting the hospital which is still regarded as a “place of death” and since the same physicians who run private clinics, also make house calls, there is no need to pay extra for care in the clinics. From the preference of those not born in Patras for private clinics, we could say that that many did come to Patras for treatment (since if they lived in the city they would not choose the extra costs of the clinic), but the figures, besides the one for the clinics, an option reserved for the few wealthy, do not convince us for a generalisation. If we have in mind the demographic composition of the city, as we analysed in detail in this paper (only four out of ten are Patrans, for the age groups 31+), these figures are quite normal given the living conditions of both immigrants and refugees and their inability to pay for the services of a physician. However, the refugees are a very special case indeed, since they have no alternative other than the hospital, given the nature of their common, yet serious illness (typhus, other epidemic diseases).

This was a first approach to the demographic characteristics of Patras. We must still study the economic and social characteristics of the population of this port-city, that after a great crisis, diversifies its activities and witnesses great growth, as well as the contribution of the refugees to this growth.