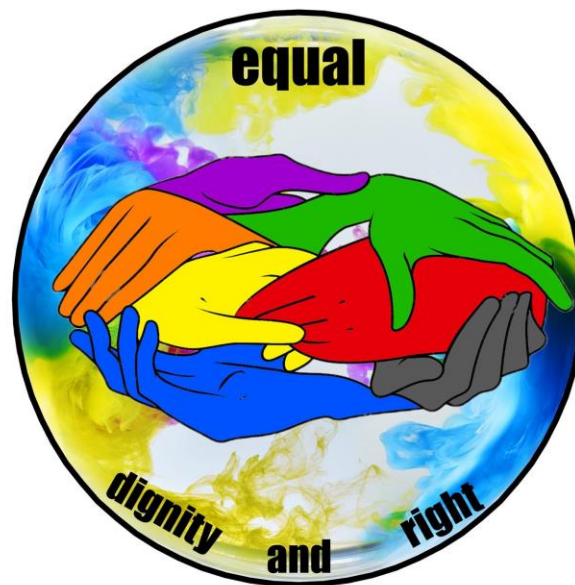


ERASMUS+ :EQUAL IN DIGNITY AND RIGHTS

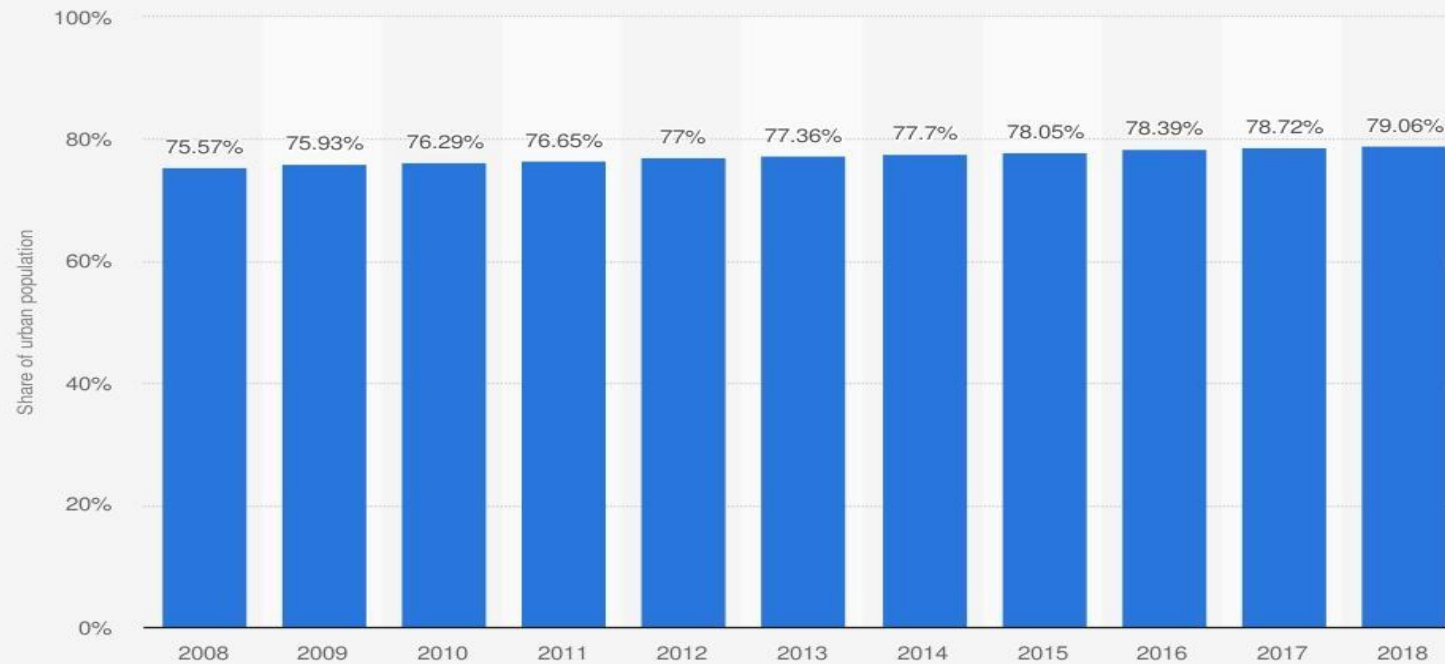
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THOMA EYGENIA

# WHY DO PEOPLE LEAVE LEMNOS?

Greece: Degree of urbanization from 2008 to 2018



Source  
World Bank  
© Statista 2020

Additional Information:  
Greece; World Bank



# LEMNOS: ONE OF THE MOST REMOTE GREEK ISLANDS.

LEMNOS IS A GREEK ISLAND IN THE NORTHERN PART OF THE AEGEAN SEA. ACCORDING TO A 2011 HEADCOUNT THE POPULATION IN LEMNOS IS 17,262. BUT HOW MUCH HAS THE POPULATION STATUS CHANGED SINCE THE LAST CENTURY?





# THE POPULATION FLUCTUATIONS

- THE POPULATION OF THE ISLAND STARTED TO DECREASE SINCE THE MIDDLE OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY:
- IN 1940 THE POPULATION OF THE ISLAND WAS 23,842.
- IN 1951 THE POPULATION OF THE ISLAND WAS 24,014.
- IN 1971 THE POPULATION OF THE ISLAND WAS 17,367.
- IN 1991 THE POPULATION OF THE ISLAND WAS 17,931.
- AS WE CAN SEE, THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE POPULATION OF 1951 AND 1971 IS QUITE NOTICEABLE. IS THIS RELATED TO THE FACT THAT THE GREEK ECONOMY WAS BLOOMING? WHY DID THE BIG GREEK CITIES GREW SO RAPIDLY IN JUST 20 YEARS?

# BUT THE MIGRATION OF THE ISLANDERS WAS NOT RESTRICTED TO THE INLAND.

MANY WERE THOSE WHO CHOSE TO LEAVE LEMNOS AND TRAVEL ABROAD. TODAY, LEMNIAN COMMUNITIES CAN BE FOUND IN ALL OVER THE WORLD.



ΛΗΜΝΙΑΚΗ ΑΔΕΛΦΟΤΗΣ Ν.Α  
1948  
LEMNIAN BROTHERHOOD  
of South Africa

Welcome to The Lemnian Brotherhood of South Africa

The aims of the Brotherhood are:

(a) To provide material and moral assistance to destitute Lemnians, to the sick, and to those who are suffering for any reason.

(b) To contribute to benevolent institutions of Lemnos and at that same time to be interested in promoting benevolent activities of the organized Hellenic establishment of South Africa.

(c) To be interested in and to support schools and other educational institution in Lemnos and in South Africa, to protect orphan or destitute children and to maintain a fund for scholarships.

(d) To be interested in and to contribute in the maintenance of churches of the Christian Orthodox faith, in Lemnos and in South Africa.

(e) To promote the development of amicable relations amongst the Lemnians brothers and to cultivate constant communication amongst them.

(f) To maintain good relations with our national representatives as well as with Religious authorities and in addition to co-operate with the Greek Community of Johannesburg and the fraternal association, within the framework of the Constitution of the Federation of Communities and Association of South Africa.



# ONE OF THEIR MAIN DESTINATIONS WAS AUSTRALIA

ORAL HISTORY SOCIETY ANNUAL CONFERENCE

COMMUNITY VOICES: ORAL HISTORY ON THE GROUND

Venue: Manchester Metropolitan University

Friday 18<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2014

North Aegean Greek Islander Migration to Australia - 1950s to 1970s

'For a Better Life We Came...'

*Melissa Afentoulis, PhD Researcher, University of Melbourne Australia*

## Abstract

Post World War II mass migration decimated Greece's population and its social and economic infrastructure with particular impacts on small island populations such as the island of Lemnos (more commonly known as *Lemnos*). During the decades of 1950's - 1970's, a large number of Lemnian islanders arrived as immigrants to Australia. More than sixty years later, this aging community appears to have integrated into the multicultural fabric of mainstream society with a degree of success. The focus of this paper is about the voices and stories of the first generation - the foundational generation of immigrants who paved the way for 'a better life' for future generations. This paper is part of a larger doctoral thesis that explores the community's migration experience with a focus on inter-generational themes from a number of perspectives through the research question: *To what extent is the pattern of return visits to the parental homeland a phenomenon that reflects identity consolidation for second generation immigrants in Australia?* The research aims to address the gap in the Greek-Lemnian migrant historiography that exists, through the oral history of the first generation and the narrative of the next generation to explore what informs their own sense of 'belonging', identity, the significance and meanings of 'home' and ancestral roots through the pattern of return visits to the ancestral *homeland*. The Victorian Lemnian Community organisation, *Hephestos*, established in 1939 by the early settlers provided the vital social infrastructure for an establishing community. This oral history project is the first attempt to capture the experiences, traumas and highlights of individuals that echo resilience, personal strength and communal vibrancy that would otherwise be lost with their passing. The value of this community oral history project is not only about the potential loss of Australian migration historiography, but importantly it is about the legacy of the oral narrative which links the past with the lives and memories of the present and future descendants of this community.

**Key Words:** Migration, Greece, Lemnos, Oral History, Identity, belonging, Inter-generational

# BUT WHAT MADE THEM LEAVE THEIR ISLAND?

THE FOLLOWINGS ARE SOME INTERVIEWS OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED THE LEMNIAN MIGRATION.

1. MARIA, 27 YEARS OLD. A LEMNIAN WHO LIVES IN LONDON
2. STRATOS, 28 YEARS OLD. A LEMNIAN WHO LIVES IN ATHENS.
3. DESPOINA, 86 YEARS OLD. A LEMNIAN TALKS ABOUT THE MIGRATION AND WHAT HAPPENED AFTER.



# INTERVIEW 1

- MY NAME IS MARIA AND I AM 27 YEARS OLD. I HAVE BEEN LIVING IN LONDON SINCE I WAS 24 YEARS OLD. THE FIRST TIME I LEFT MY ISLAND WAS WHEN I WENT TO COLLEGE IN ATHENS. BACK THEN I WAS 17 YEARS OLD. SINCE I GRADUATED COLLEGE I HAD NEVER THOUGHT OF GOING ABROAD. BUT ONE YEAR AFTER I GRADUATED I WAS OFFERED A MSc SCHOLARSHIP FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON. THIS WAS THE OPPORTUNITY OF A LIFETIME. BUT EVEN THEN I THOUGHT I WOULD GO BACK TO GREECE WHEN IT WAS OVER. BUT WHEN I GOT MY CERTIFICATE I GOT A JOB PROPOSAL. NOW I AM A CEO IN A BRITISH COMPANY. I THINK THE MAIN REASON I DID NOT GO BACK TO MY ISLAND IS BECAUSE OF MY JOB AND THE ECONOMIC CRISIS IN GREECE. IT WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT FOR ME TO FIND A NEW JOB IN SUCH A SMALL SOCIETY.



## INTERVIEW 2

- MY NAME IS STRATOS AND I AM 28 YEARS OLD. I WAS BORN AND RAISED IN MYRINA. I STAYED IN LEMNOS SINCE I WAS 23 YEARS OLD. I FIRST WENT TO THESSALONIKI, BECAUSE ONE OF MY RELATIVES OFFERED TO HOST ME AND HELP ME FIND A JOB. IN LEMNOS I WAS STRUGGLING TO PAY MY RENT, BECAUSE I DO NOT HAVE A UNIVERSITY DEGREE AND THEREFORE I WAS NOT ABLE TO GET A GAINFUL ENOUGH JOB. I LIVED IN THESSALONIKI FOR 2 YEARS. THEN, I MOVED WITH MY GIRLFRIEND TO ATHENS. SHE IS FROM ATHENS, SO I DID NOT HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT MY ACCOMMODATION. FORTUNATELY I MANAGED TO GET A PERMANENT AND LUCRATIVE JOB. I GOT MARRIED AND DECIDED TO LIVE PERMANENTLY IN ATHENS. NOW, LEMNOS FOR ME IS A HOLIDAY DESTINATION AND THE ISLAND I WILL ALWAYS HAVE IN MY HEART. BUT, IF I HAD STAYED IN LEMNOS I WOULD PROBABLY BE UNEMPLOYED.



## INTERVIEW 3

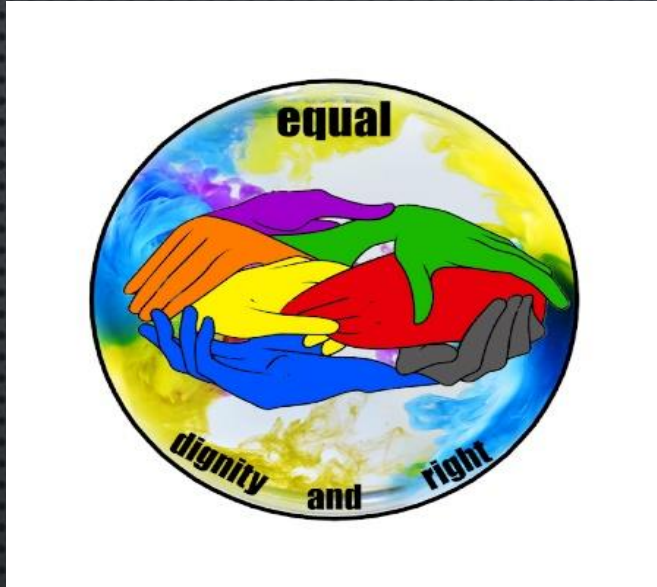
1. THE VILLAGE STARTED DEPOPULATING SINCE THE 70s. EVERYTHING HAS CHANGED. SIXTY YEARS AGO YOU COULD SEE PEOPLE EVERYWHERE. THE TAVERNS WERE ALMOST ALWAYS FULL AND THE FAMILIES HAD 5 PLUS CHILDREN EACH. YOU COULD HEAR THEM PLAYING ALL DAY LONG IN THE STREETS. LOOK AT THE STREETS NOW. IF YOU ROAM AROUND THE VILLAGE YOU WILL SEE NOTHING BUT CLOSED DOORS AND SHUTTERED WINDOWS. IT MAKES ME SAD. WE USED TO BE OVER 600 HABITANTS. NOW THERE IS ONLY 300 LEFT. PEOPLE WANT THEIR CHILDREN TO DO MANY ACTIVITIES AND GO TO UNIVERSITIES. WE DO NOT HAVE THESE HERE. WE LIVE SIMPLE AND QUIET LIVES. WHEN I WAS YOUNG EVERY VILLAGE USED TO HAVE ITS OWN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL. NOW ONLY 5 OR 6 VILLAGES DO. BUT I AM NOT GOING TO BE HERE WHEN MY VILLAGE TURN INTO A GOAST.



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