

## CHANGES IN HUMAN GEOGRAPHY: SCENARIOS OF COUNTER-URBANIZATION IN THE CONTEXT OF ECONOMIC CRISIS

**Evgenia ANASTASIOU**

Postdoctoral Researcher, University of Thessaly  
evanastasiou@uth.gr

### **Abstract**

The last decade economic developments affected to a large extent the demographic structure of Greece. The period 2001-2011 is characterized by a net slowdown of the intense urbanization trend, while in the context of crisis there have been identified counter-urban trends, revealing new attractiveness zones in the rural areas. These indications of mobility do not concern entirely the countryside as the newcomers settle only in specific rural spatial units. At the same time these areas have specific features that facilitate the establishment of a new population, such as population dynamics, tourism development, agricultural activity, services and structures, reduction of geographical isolation, low cost of living and habitation.

The future of internal migration in Greece heavily depends on existing trends as well as future economic, social and political developments. Though, the lack of official data for the period after 2011 constrains our understanding for the development of internal migration and particularly counter-urban trends in Greece.

The present paper raises the issue of the prospects of the establishment of the Greek population in the countryside, taking into account the pull factors of rural areas. Through Foresight and Strategic Thinking Methods, a longer-term framework is being developed to reflect the potential strategic choices of the internal migrants. This approach is based on a mainly qualitative analysis, scenario planning, in order to present the prerequisites for the further development of such a type of mobility.

**Keywords:** foresight, scenario planning, internal migration, population, countryside

**JEL classification:** J1, J6, J11, R23

### **1. Introduction**

Recent studies concerning the internal migration (to a large spatial scale) show the Greeks' population mobility trend from urban to rural areas as developing phenomenon, however of limited intensity compared to other European countries (Gkartzios 2013). The internal migrants' search focuses on the added value, which the perspective place of settlement has to offer to the newcomers. The pull factors that make rural space attractive, focus on areas with population dynamics, tourism development, agricultural activity, services and structures, reduction of geographical isolation, low cost of living and habitation (Anastasiou and Duquenne 2019).

Main purpose of the study is to examine the prospects of the urban population's settlement in the countryside, in the horizon 2030. The period of the study coincides with the developing recession in Greece, therefore in the light of a more secure approach, the phenomenon is set to examination on a medium-term basis. Consequently, by analyzing the present, both the recession component and its duration will be taken into account to a great extent, since its presence actually increases the environment's unsettledness under which the settlement to the rural is studied.

The qualitative approach of the present is based upon the valuation of the conditions which prevail in the external environment (economic, social, technological, and political) in combination with the Greek countryside's attractiveness factors. Through prospective methods and in particular Strategic Thinking, there will turn out a spectrum of possible scenario as far as the prospects of the Greek settlement in the countryside are concerned. On the one hand the alternative scenarios which will be raised will make it clear whether the settlement in the countryside constitutes a phenomenon which was founded in Greece under the circumstances of the financial crisis and what will be the trend of it in the post crisis era.

On the other hand, scenarios will play a major role in the decision making process as well as in the policymaking in order to plan strategies concerning the revival of the countryside.

## **2. Return to the countryside in the context of crisis in Greece**

In recent decades there is observed an increase in the population of urban areas and moreover an agglomeration effect of the Greek population in the two main metropolitan areas, Athens and Thessaloniki (Kotzamanis and Michou 2010). This population distribution change (Dimelli 2016) is mainly caused due to the depreciation of the primary sector and the simultaneous rapid development of the tertiary one (Pnevmatikos, Polyzos, and Tsiotas 2019). As a result, due to the depopulation a large part of the rural areas is characterized as fragile, disadvantaged and marginal (Hadjou and Duquenne 2013). It is evident through the censuses that the alpine population is leaving the mountainous settlements for destinations with urban identity (Xanthos, Ladias, and Genitsaropoulos 2013). At the same time though, the Greek countryside has started changing and transforming to a place of multiple economic and social activities development (Gousios 1999). There is furthermore a trend to focus on the improvement of quality of life in the rural areas rather than primary sector competitiveness (Papadopoulou, Papalexioiu, and Hasanagas 2012).

The examination of the settlement in the countryside during the decade 2001-2011 has shown a trend on out of the urban space (Anthopoulou, Kaberis, and Petrou 2017; Anthopoulou and Petrou 2015; Anastasiou and Duquenne 2017). The economic crisis in Greece affected directly and to a large extends the urban areas. Region of Attica (includes the metropolitan area of Athens) has suffered a significant stress, mainly due to the nature of the economic activities developed there. At the same time, rural space has been shown to be more resilient to the economic crisis (Psycharis, Kallioras, and Pantazis 2014).

A great part of the Greek countryside (30% on urban municipal inflows) is characterized by a particularly remarkable counter urban flows intensity (10% - 25%), whereas the settlement takes place in the predominant rural and semi-rural municipalities (Anastasiou and Duquenne 2017). The onset of the crisis in Greece and specifically the period 2008-2011, coincides with the move of almost 17,000 people from the urban space to rural areas in order to work in the primary sector (Kasimis and Papadopoulos 2013). Qualitative surveys link these movements with the existence of high family ties and owned property (Gkartzios 2013). Furthermore, quantitative research reveals that a vast majority of young Athenians, especially those stricken by unemployment, is willing to change place of residence and move towards non-metropolitan destinations (Remoundou, Gkartzios, and Garrod 2016).

The Greeks moving in the internal part of the country go to various places: each age group moves to specific regions according to their needs. Despite the fact that the urban population's tendency to settle in the countryside was diagnosed (Koutsou and Anthopoulou 2008; Duquenne 2009), these movements had a particular intention, while the movers' flows were seen in particular patterns of regions (Anastasiou and Duquenne 2017), in other words there exist several types of rural mobilities (Pratsinakis, Hatziprokopiou, and King 2017). The majority of these municipal inflows is nowhere near to some urban center and is concentrated mostly on mountainous as well as insular and coastal parts of Greece. This fact confirms that it is not just about an urban influence to the neighboring space, but there is indeed a developing rural trend of a new classification in the population, resulting in the reformation of the predominantly rural countryside both to a social and economic level.

Discussions about the rural settlement of the Greeks amid the economic crisis are taking place within the academic community. What is at stake here is the likelihood of the countryside's revitalization, since counter-urban trend was not a temporary phenomenon but was actually confirmed over the next ten years. The recession Greece suffered starting in 2008, was probably the onset of the emergence of urban mobility flows in the Greek countryside. Given that, what is raised here is as to what extend this recession acted as a motive of a real change of lifestyle. However, the bibliography along with the exploratory research focusing on the counter urban trends in the context of the crisis is limited (Gkartzios 2013; Anthopoulou, Kaberis, and Petrou 2017), whereas the census data do not include the reasons for changing place of residence and therefore it is complicated to come to reliable conclusions. A recent qualitative research conducted in Greece depicts the relocation and/or the willingness of relocation of Athenian households to the Greek province in the context of

the crisis (Gkartzios and Scott 2015). Empirical studies also reveal that a respectively big proportion of counter-urbans associate their move to the rural with the crisis, whereas the relocation is focused on medium sized towns (Gkartzios, Remoundou, and Garrod 2017).

### 3. Foresight philosophy and scenario planning methodology

It is acknowledged that the attempts to make accurate predictions for specific future points encrypt high risk and thus there has been established an alternative way of thinking that incorporates a number of possible futures (Portaleoni et al. 2013). Foresight is a planning method developed initially by military planning that, especially in the last decade, is applied in European social policy in order to combine possible futures, strategic planning and policy making (Kurekova 2014; Stratigea 2014). Foresight is highly connected to the human capacity (Conway 2004) and concerns our ability to think of the future systematically and make “mental maps” (Central & East European Health Policy Network 2012) for the ultimate purpose of making decisions in the present (Voros 2001). These kind of future mental maps, in other words the alternative future scenarios, might happen, but they also might not happen (Vah Jevšnik and Toplak 2014). Strategic thinking (Foresight) is the first part of the Strategy development process, followed by Strategic Decision Making and Strategic Planning. At this stage it is not paid the proper attention, since thinking is just a vague meaning and it cannot directly produce quantitative results (Conway 2014), nevertheless is the key stage for developing strategies.

Foresight methodologies are classified into four successive levels (Table 1) depending on the questions to be answered (Input, Foresight, Output, Strategy).

**Table 1: Foresight Methodologies Classification**

	Levels	Questions	Representative Tools
	Input	What is going on?	Delphi, Environmental Scanning
	Analysis	What seems to be happening?	Trend analysis, cross-impact matrices
<b>Foresight</b>	Interpretation	What’s really happening?	Systems Thinking Causal Layered Analysis
	Prospection	What might happen?	Scenarios, Visioning Normative methods, Backcasts
	Output	What might we need to do?	Reports, Presentations Workshops
	Strategy	What will we do? How will we do it?	Strategy Development & Strategic Planning: individual, workgroup, society, etc

Source: (Voros 2003), Author’s compilation

Foresight features a deep diversification in relation to the alternative prediction methods. It uses a multi-scientific approach based on the principle that not all problems that we face can be made logically sustainable if they are broken down to one dimension and divided into several parts. Instead, Foresight suggests an approach which is aware of the realities as a whole, including all variables acting on them, regardless of their type (De Jouvenel 2004).

The Prospective methods constitute the most crucial and creative stage for the development of a strategy. Since the future is explored, the actors are creating images concerning potential future developments on which they can try their strategy through questions such as “What if...?”. The most important fact is that future potential dangers are being examined, yet without having consequences to be transferred to the present. The prospective methods are in pursuit of developing a viewpoint of alternative future prospects

regarding a phenomenon. Programming scenarios is a well-known prospective method which is cooperative and not an isolated activity (Ogilvy 2000). The scenario development is an anthropocentric method demanding knowledge and expertise as combines and intersects information about the external environment as well as information about the internal one.

The scenario planning aim as in every “future” method is not to foresee the future since this is impossible (De Jouvenel 2004), but to project some alternatives as to what may be possible to happen. The exploration of the alternative futures requires a cautious approach since is the mainstay of strategy developments. When scenario making is done properly then fresh and innovative ways of thinking arise. The most critical point here is that scenario planning is a tool, not an output (Conway 2014), while there is a specific methodological framework to be followed (Table 2).

**Table 2: The scenario development stages**

<b>Stages</b>	<b>Description</b>
Definition of the scope	Time frame Scope of the analysis
Environmental Scanning	Internal Environment External Environment Driving Forces - Basic Trends
Identification of Key Uncertainties	Evaluation of driving forces
Scenario Matrix	Influence – Uncertainty Grid
Scenario Development	Intuition, sensibility

Source: (De Jouvenel 2004)

Each scenario describes the result of the combination of a series of elements. This process incorporates past and present information, to be interpreted with reference to probe future strategic possibilities. The scenarios are based on the analysis and interpretation of the information about the external factors of the change, which may be crucial enough for the under study phenomenon (Conway 2004; Voros 2001).

In a review of scenario planning literature on migration and mobility studies it is evident that foresight methods act complementary and consist useful tools for migration policy and decision making in the medium-term future (Kurekova, 2014; Saunders and Arminaitė, 2014; Vah Jevšnik and Toplak, 2014; Stratigea, 2014). Furthermore, foresight is a driving force for pushing regional competitiveness as well as resilience (Zakharova et al. 2016).

#### **4. Analysis**

The internal environment of the under study phenomenon concerns the main interpretive factors of the settlement in the Greek countryside (pull factors) (Anastasiou and Duquenne, 2019): population dynamics, tourism development, agricultural activity, services and structures, reduction of geographical isolation, low cost of living and habitation. As regards external environment, the future of counter-urbanization in Greece heavily depends on existing trends as well as future economic, social, digital and political developments (Table 3). For this reason, a thorough bibliographic search took place, as well as a series of interviews was contacted to experts of acknowledged research experience, regarding the developments in the countryside and the influence of crisis in the internal migration flows and in particular of the counter-urban ones.

**Table 3: External Environment: Definition of Uncertainty level**

<b>Drivers of Change</b>	<b>Elements that define the degree of uncertainty</b>	<b>Uncertainty</b>
Labor Market and Unemployment	Development of Occupation, Work cycle index in the provision of accommodation and food service activities, Reforms in the labor market, Employees pay, Working Poor, Total unemployment, Youth unemployment, Long-term unemployment	High
Brain Drain	Development of the external flows of human resources, Gender and age migration balance (20-39 years), High specialization of external migrants, Tension of repatriation of foreign migrants, Social distrust	Medium
Demographic Developments	Low fertility rates, High life expectancy, Demographic aging Increase of the aged population, Negative migration balance, Negative natural balance, OECD, UNPP, Eurostat and Dianeosis Predictions	Low
Digital Integration	ICT development, Digital Economy and Society Index (SEDI), limited broadband connection of high speed, high broadband coverage of rural areas, Connectivity, Specialization of human capital in ICT, Digitization of public services, Digital skills, Private investment for NGA	Medium
Development of Economy	International Economy, Change of domestic production, Growth rate, Household consumption, Evolution of private investment, Competition, Public Debt, Primary surplus, Inflation, Trade balance, Poverty risk	High
New Consumption and Production Pattern	Environmental protection, Healthy life, Consumers' perceptions, Price-quality-origin-Food safety, Classical intensive production challenge, Multilateralism, Incorporation of new and innovative technologies, Precision agriculture, Occupational opportunities in the primary sector, Average age of farmers, Rural Income, Attractiveness of the Agricultural Occupation, Education & Training of Farmers and Agronomists, Implementation of the CAP	High
Political Stability	Lack of representation (Parties, Parliament, Government) Quality of Governance Institutions, Ineffective Public Sector, Corruption, Bureaucracy, Opacity, Favoritism, Unreliability, Disputes in Institutions - Leadership - Trade Unions, Low expectations of citizens, Electoral abstention, "Much Representation - Little Democracy"	High
International Relations	Terrorism, Refugee issue, Environmental protection, Brexit, Increase in extreme nationalist forces, Foreign Policy of the USA (North Korea, China, Saudi Arabia), Middle East-Rising Market	High

Source: Author's compilation

The intersection of the drivers of change (external environment) in combination with the main interpretive factors of the settlement to the Greek countryside is illustrated in the Influence-Uncertainty Grid (Table 4). The factors' matrix represents to what extent the researcher thinks that every driver of change influences the internal migration, in relation to the extent of uncertainty of its development in the medium-term future.

**Table 4: Influence – Uncertainty Grid**

<b>Influence - Uncertainty</b>	<b>Components</b>
High - High	Labor Market and Unemployment Development of Economy New Consumption and Production Pattern
High - Medium	Digital Integration Brain Drain
High - Low	Tourists Attractiveness Internal Population Dynamic
Medium - Low	Geographical Isolation
Low - Low	Population Developments
Medium - High	Supply of Structures and Services
Low - High	Political Stability International Relations

Source: Author's compilation

The Strategic Thinking methodology defines extensively and precisely the way of building the scenarios. However, since the analysis concerns a predominantly qualitative approach, the development of potential future scenarios to a large extent involves the subjective perception of the researcher concerned.

## **5. Results**

The drivers of change (components) involved in the final grid of scenarios are those that, according to the researcher, show High-High, Medium-High and High-Medium levels of influence-uncertainty as concerns counter-urbanization in Greece. All drivers of change are featured, each one along with three alternative hypotheses, regarding their development within the study period (Table 5). The alternative hypotheses illustrate three potential outcomes of the drivers of change, as regards the settlement in the countryside: The first hypothesis illustrates the adverse scenario, the second the moderate one, whereas the third depicts the best development of the settlement to the rural during the study period. According to scenario planning methodology the following suggestions are in force: the first three components concern the external environment, whereas regarding their participation in the scenarios it is recommended that two out of the three should be necessarily used. The fourth and fifth component concern the interpretive factors of the countryside's attractiveness and the methodological frame points out the participation of at least one out of the two in order to build a scenario. Finally, the sixth and seventh components concern the external environment of the analysis and their participation in the scenarios' formation is optional.

<b>HYPOTHESES</b>			
<b>Drivers of Change</b>	<b>HYPOTHESIS 1</b>	<b>HYPOTHESIS 2</b>	<b>HYPOTHESIS 3</b>
Labor Market and Unemployment	Persistence of the unemployment level and jobs cut	Limited downward trend and keep of unemployment at high levels	Progressive reduction in unemployment and creation of new jobs
Economy	Stagnation in current levels	Limited and slow recovery	Intense and fast recovery
New Consumption and Production Pattern	Application of obsolete productive practices & not essential changes in the consumer's attitude	Limited application of new practices & not gradual change in the consumer's attitude	Important turn to new productive procedures and consumption patterns
Internal Population Dynamics	Reversion	Stability	Durability
Tourist Attractiveness	Decline in tourism activity	Stability in tourism activity	Growth in tourism activity
Supply of Structures and Services	Stop of several structures' operation	Keep of the existing structures	Creation of new structures
Digital Integration	Keep of the lag	Progressive digital development	Intensification of digital growth

Source: Author's compilation

Theoretically, 343 possible hypotheses combinations result from the Scenarios Grid. However most of these combinations don't have reasonable interpretations. To what extent can the "keep of unemployment level" hypothesis be in line with "Intense and fast recovery" in the economy? Consequently, the most rational combinations were looked into and finally five main scenarios were built. The first scenario constitutes the most unfavorable, while the fifth one would be the most ideal.

- Scenario 1: Stop of the settlement trend to the countryside and upward urbanization trends

The exceptionally adverse scenario1 includes hypotheses which not only interrupt the settlement to the countryside, but on the contrary they favor urbanization trends. There emerge strong indications that the counter-urbanization stops, given that the hypotheses' crosschecking pave the way for further urbanization. In this scenario Greece has gotten away from the financial nadir; however, that has not been perceptible at a micro-economic level. Preservation of the unemployment, *ceteris paribus*, stirs up mobility in the internal part of the country. A potential progressive reduction in unemployment and the creation of new jobs, in combination with the rest of the components, encourages a part of rural population to move to the urban areas. On the contrary, it discourages urban inhabitants to migrate to the countryside.

This concept is further enhanced by the fact that the negative perception about the rural sector is still in force. At the same time the classic pattern of the Greek traditional farming keeps preserving its dynamics, resulting in the non-application of new methods and practices. Consequently, young capable people who have the know-how needed to revive Greek farming and to promote their agricultural holding are discouraged. So, they find their way out by seeking occupational opportunities in the urban space, where more possibilities arise. Therefore, despite the fact that agriculture is important both in food production as in occupation, young people don't regard farming as attractive. As a result, the number of farmers is continually decreasing and the countryside is finally deserted by its population.

Furthermore, the Greek countryside is characterized by a relative inadequacy when it comes to its structures and services, having to do with residents' need coverage (such as police stations and health centers). On top of that, the municipal

units are digitally isolated, resulting in the inhabitants; introversion both socially and professionally. A component of equal importance is that of the population dynamics of the countryside. Some rural areas' reversion of their relative dynamics (due to retirement, decrease in the number of births or the negative inflows of young people and households) create desertification conditions. The shortage of occupational opportunities along with the development of a social identity lead young people to abandon the countryside and move to an urban center, so that they may be able to seek better life prospects.

- Scenario 2: The Greek countryside grows old and attract the elderly

Scenario 2 satisfies the settlement conditions of the elderly population's mobility from the urban space to the countryside. The limited downward trend in unemployment and the economy's stabilization in the current variable levels, create negative improvement conditions in labor market. In this regard, Greek countryside keeps suffering and the possible option to the young's labor impasse would be the settlement to the urban space.

The intensified aging plays a defining role, given that foresight analysis set pensioners as a particularly important group in the intensity measurement of the settlement to the countryside. According to scenario, the internal population dynamics in rural areas will be reversed. In other words, the population in rural areas will be aging without being renewed. Therefore, it becomes known that although a part of the high intensity inflows to the rural is motivated by the pensioners, the areas whose population ages, tend to attract aging. This special population group bears the following unique characteristics: within the frame of retirement they are not interested in the economic activity of an area, since their living does not depend on this. Furthermore, pensioners don't easily change their consumption habits. Consequently, the rural space component cannot be taken into account, as pensioners do not play an active role in it either as producers or as consumers.

The rural areas that describe the scenario 2 are neither insular nor coastal, but mountainous with a relative level of tourism. In Greece, there is a trend towards agro-tourism and especially mountain-alternative tourism, but it cannot be anticipated in advance that it will flourish or will decline in the coming years. The preservation of poor digital integration is not a phenomenon that affects the elderly's migratory destination choice, as opposed to young people. In contrast, preservation of the existing structures and services are important assets, as they provide to the elderly a relative sense of safety and health.

- Scenario 3: Preservation of the current settlement trend to the countryside

It could be claimed, to some extent, that Scenario 3 illustrates the current situation in Greece. The settlement in the Greek countryside by 2030 is expected to evolve preserving the same intensity as the last population census. This is essentially the 'status quo' of rural areas. This scenario's conditions are not suitable for internal movements into the non-urban space. However, there are tangible signs that the share of people who are severely affected by the general situation in Greece perceives the prospect of a shift in employment as well as in life as a whole.

The conditions favoring this mobility concern mostly the limited but slow downward unemployment trend and the persistence of comparatively high unemployment rates, as mentioned before. The limited but certain revival of the economy creates occupational perspectives in the countryside. In particular, those who suffer from recession in the urban centers will move to the rural, given that they own agricultural land to exploit. This is probably the most important motive for settling to a non-urban destination, since the conditions prevailing in the countryside (based on Scenario 3) are not adequate enough to justify such mobility. In particular, owing agricultural land in combination with young peoples' knowledge on primary sector along with the application of new practices, offer an important revival chance and further occupation opportunities. It is important to note that the development of such change in the primary sector is mainly due to the already existing population dynamic in specific rural areas.

As regards the digital integration component, the lag elongation acts suppressive to the migrating decision making, especially that of young people and households, as new technologies become essential in their everyday lives. What offsets this disadvantage is the preservation of the existing structures and services as it offers safety and reassures families with underage children. Concluding, recession made it possible for the agricultural sector to get into a growth path or at least a revival. It seems that the new population's settlement in the countryside in times of crisis benefited the entrepreneurship. It also contributed to the development of a more effective and innovative agriculture, which could potentially contribute to the installation of other young people, but provided that the infrastructure and the evolution of technology are improved.

- Scenario 4: Intensification of the settlement in the countryside

Scenario 4 show the prerequisites so that the population settlement from the urban space to the rural will be intensified, taking for granted that labor market and economy by 2030 will remain at the same levels as today's. This is essentially a negative scenario regarding the general economic context in Greece, which nevertheless creates the conditions for the revival of the rural areas. This particular scenario suggests that there are population groups that choose to move in the countryside so as to change their lifestyle and search for better living conditions, close to the nature. This approach attributed to the relative downward trend of unemployment. Despite the current high levels, there has started a slow reversion of this trend and consequently the creation of new jobs.

The fact that young people leave the job search in the urban areas, especially under the increased chance of failure, and motivated by their engagement in activities which can be developed in the rural, reinforce their conviction of an essential change of lifestyle. On the other hand, there is this young group who despite of the improved level of the labor market, find it hard to join in the workplace on the grounds that the unemployment trend is kept at high levels. Being hard for the young people to enter the labor market is a fact that affects internal migration. Some Greeks regard countryside as an alternative solution to the recession. Other than the economy frame, conditions for the population's settlement to the countryside can be created, since there are prerequisites for occupation, especially in the tourism and primary sector.

From a different perspective, it could be said that the intensification is based on what countryside can offer to the potential newcomers, namely to the versatile dynamic of a settlement destination. The parallel and complementary development of tourism and agriculture boosts the intensification of the settlement, in areas which are proper to offer activities and cover not only the elderly needs but also those of the younger. Particularly important is the component of the progressive digital integration. That includes areas which can combine and offer alternative forms of occupation along with new applicable trends in agriculture. In other words, beyond social networking other types of entrepreneurship as well as digital services could be developed. Finally, settlement intensification is actually based on a triptych: (a) distrust of young people about the possibilities to find a job in urban areas (b) agriculture and tourist development (c) digital upgrade.

- Scenario 5: Settlement in the countryside as an intense phenomenon in the context of crisis

The uncertainty prevailing in Greece over the last decade is the basis for the Greeks' decision making for changing place of residence and population reclassification. Prior to 2008, ceteris paribus, in spite of counter-urbanization trends in specific rural areas, urbanization was the predominant trend of internal migration. Scenario 5 establishes a new rural revival pattern: the installation in the Greek countryside is not just a trend, but a phenomenon that emerges through an economic crisis period. It is absolutely interwoven with the high rates of unemployment, low job supplies and economic distress at microeconomic as well as macroeconomic level.

In the last scenario establishment in the countryside is encouraged by a clearly recession-stricken environment. The financial crisis confirms that a part of Greek people makes the decision for inadvertent internal migration. Despite its negative aspect, crisis indirectly helped in the revitalization of certain areas of the countryside as well as the development of new forms of entrepreneurship. The sharp rise in unemployment is particularly affecting the urban centers. This fact combined with limited jobs has a negative impact on peoples' leaving urban areas and at the same time contributes to the outflows to the non-urban areas. The negative level of the unemployment rate has a positive impact on the change of migratory destination and in particular it pushes urban residents into the countryside. This is because limited opportunities and jobs are affected by adverse economic conditions, and therefore the workforce, in search of a longer-term solution, is turning to other areas of activity that are primarily developing in the non-urban areas.

Such areas of activity are the primary sector and the touristic ones. The primary sector is really starting to rejuvenate and this is due to the application of new practices and technologies. The recession of the Greek economy and at the same time significant unemployment among young people have made the agricultural profession quite attractive. There is a tendency for young people to return to agriculture, who are nevertheless investing in innovation, research and production technology for high value-added products and services, radically changing the classic and rather old-fashioned and obsolete practices and attitudes.

With regard to areas with increased tourist attractiveness it is clear that a variety of economic activities are developing and operating at the same time, which adds a clear dynamic to the area. The hypothesis of progressive digital development makes the scenario of intensifying the installation in the countryside even more attractive, as it offers a high sense of socialization and extroversion while facilitating the development of service delivery. In addition, digital integration provides the ground for the development of innovative methods of employment through electronic devices. The primary sector and tourism are developing substantially. Combined with the dynamics of rural areas and the progressive digital development, this scenario fulfills all the requirements for the Greek countryside to become a pole of attraction for young people and households.

## **6. Discussion**

Foresight methodologies pursue the data collection along with their comprehension so people can think in different and new ways for the future. This data can be collected by people or by analyzing documents and objects or both, while they can be analyzed using qualitative and/or quantitative techniques. However, to be used in strategy processes, data must be analyzed, interpreted, and used in a way that makes sense. The information derived from this analysis and interpretation allow for a better understanding of the past and the present, which provides the basis for the use of forecasting methods to explore possible future developments.

In the present paper, an effort has been made to create scenarios with the ultimate aim of making clear the prospects of the Greeks settling in the countryside in a ten-year horizon, with emphasis on a qualitative analysis method, scenario planning. In order to create the scenarios there was carried out an analysis of the conditions in the external environment –such as political, economic, social, digital, and demographic- and the attractiveness factors of the Greek countryside. The analysis has shown whether the installation in the countryside is a phenomenon established in Greece in conditions of economic crisis and secondly the most likely scenarios and conditions for this settlement to the countryside to last. The development of the scenarios surrounding the phenomenon of return to the countryside in Greece in times of crisis is primarily an unintended phenomenon, which is fueled and evolving due to the economic crisis. However, it has contributed to the revitalization of some rural areas, especially the areas that have experienced high inflows.

Future developments are difficult to predict nevertheless they have a high impact on the policy recommendations. In turn, the lack of data lays the basis for a lack of policy. It is further acknowledged that the quantitative methodology used cannot reveal the empirical approach of internal mobility in a context of crisis. Nevertheless, this research provides useful insights on the importance of socioeconomic considerations in understanding mobility patterns, and it does respond to a stated call for more engagement with quantitative and experimental methods in rural mobility research.

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