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Imagining ‘home’: Diasporic landscapes of the Greek-German second generation

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This article presents research on second-generation Greek-Germans, both those living in diaspora, and those who have ‘returned’ to Greece. The research is multi-sited, with fieldwork in Berlin, Athens, central and northern Greece. After defining and problematising the notions of ‘second generation’ and ‘return’ – especially complex in this context – we focus on the second generation’s diasporic imaginings of ‘home’, particularly their experiences and narrative framings of landscape, space and place. In their narratives, participants ‘remember’ their parents’ narratives about the homeland, and narrate their own experiences of returning to the diasporic hearth. Contrasts are drawn across diverse diasporic landscape imaginings and experiences: between received diasporic memories and ‘pragmatic’ experiences; holiday visits and long-term return; urban, rural and other spaces; and different sites in the diaspora, such as the place of upbringing and the ancestral home.

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1. Introduction

This article focuses on geographies of place and mobility in order to understand how diasporic landscapes are experienced, imagined, mediated and negotiated by second-generation Greek-Germans living in Germany or who have relocated to the ancestral homeland. We explore the varied meanings of ‘landscape’, from territorial, place-based ‘reality’ to the psychological, imaginative-based context. In using the trope of landscape to enter the field of diasporic identities and mobilities, we appreciate that, for people on the move and in diaspora, landscapes are a constant source of both joy and pain, never to be taken for granted (Bender and Winer, 2001, p. i).

Epistemologically this paper is set within a now-strong conceptual trend towards drawing out the spatialities and temporalities of transnational and diasporic experience (Blunt, 2007; Featherstone et al., 2007; Mitchell, 1997; Ní Laoire, 2003). Without wishing to become immediately embroiled in the debate about precise distinctions between the overlapping concepts of diaspora and transnationalism, we see the former as less about the transnational circulation of people, economic activities and social relations, and more about the links between diaspora members, their identity and their homeland over the longer term – sometimes across generations. As Blunt and Dowling (2006, p. 199) cogently point out, the lived experiences and spatial imaginaries of people living in diaspora revolve around specific places and landscapes; the relationship between home and homeland; and the intersections of home, migration, memory, identity and belonging.

Our approach is partly inspired by Basu’s research on Scottish diasporic ‘clanscapes’ and their role in the ‘roots tourism’ of the Scottish diaspora in North America (Basu, 2005, 2007). For the Greek diaspora such ‘emotional landscapes’ involve the location of kin, family land, villages and islands of ancestral origin, and a broader but often idealised and mythologised connection to Greece and its way of life. In Christou and King (2006, p. 823) we described the reaction of a second-generation Greek-American ‘returnee’ who went to visit the village cemetery where his grandfather was buried: as he scooped up the soil surrounding the grave and let it run through his fingers it was as if his grandfather’s blood was running through his veins. As an evocation of the diaspora’s connections to the ancestral landscape, this could hardly be more powerful.

Our empirical data for this article come from ongoing research on the ‘return’ of second-generation Greeks to their parents’ homeland. Earlier phases have concentrated on the Greek-American case (Christou, 2006; Christou and King, 2006); here we present our first analysis devoted purely to the Greek-German material. The thematic foci are cultural geographies of home, belonging and identity; the notion of diasporic landscapes figures prominently in these themes and is central to our analysis. The evidence base is composed of more than fifty ‘voices’, collected in single-participant semi-structured interviews during 2007 and 2008 in Berlin, Athens and central/northern Greece. The narrative extracts below – quotes which are the most ‘typical’ and informative – are but a small sample of our full database.

While memory figures prominently in our participants’ narratives, action and conscious decision-making are also at the centre

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of their everyday lives in both the host society and the ancestral homeland, creating cultural geographies of diaspora which unfold in space and time (Christou, 2006). These cultural geographies are expressions of the second generation's multiple identification processes, also reflected in different forms of narrativity (Goodson, 2006). 'Essentialist' narratives are externally scripted, largely inculcated by their Greek parents for whom a return to Greece is a mythical aspiration. At the other end of the spectrum are 'flexible' and individualist narrative forms, where identity is provisional and contingent, and 'belonging' no longer an overarching aspiration. We also encounter 'hybrid' forms of narrativity that selectively produce a packaging of a personal vision within the 'essentialised' script of Greekness. As our evidence unfolds, we draw attention to these narrative types and their connection to different readings of home, identity and belonging.

We first define and problematise the notions of 'second generation' and 'return', particularly multifaceted in the context of this research on second-generation Greek-Germans. Some background is next given on Greek migration to Germany. We then explore the notion of diasporic landscapes, followed by a brief yet self-reflexive account of methodology. In the main body of the paper we order our participants' experiences of diasporic landscapes into three dimensions: roots and routes, landscapes of memory, and landscapes of (dis)placement. Participants recount notions of 'home', place and space in diverse locations, both in the 'homeland' (urban, rural and island spaces) and in the 'hostland' (Berlin and Germany); these diasporic experiences and imaginaries consist of mnemonic articulations, narrations of 'homecoming' visits, and stories of definitive return. Finally, we assess our contribution to the literature on diasporic identities and homelands.

2. Problematising 'second generation' and 'return'

The term 'second generation' poses challenges both as a descriptive notion and as an analytic category. Through a rather too-flexible use of the term, definitions appear blurred and hence imprecise. The most common usage alludes to the offspring of the first generation, the initial migrants to the host country. Complications arise when children have one immigrant parent – through 'mixed marriages' – or when children's early lives are divided between two countries, by, for instance, being sent to Greece for part of their childhood. Our research revealed many such cases. We nevertheless persist in using 'second generation' as an appropriate term, not least because our participants 'identify' with it to describe their background.

Another terminological issue requiring clarification is the 'return project' of second generationers who consciously decide, often independently of their parents who remain abroad, to relocate to the 'homeland'. In the statistical measurement of migration, this is not true return because our participants were born in Germany, but personal circumstances, including a quest for 'home' and 'identity', have brought them 'back' to Greece. Scholars of return migration often ignore or dismiss this 'return that is not return' (Bovenkerk, 1974, p. 19). Others have surveyed 'ancestral return' (King et al., 1983, pp. 10–12) or 'counter-diasporic migration' (King and Christou, 2008) more systematically, revealing it as a widespread, growing phenomenon (Levitt, 2009). Growing up 'abroad' but within a family socialisation which emphasised ethnic cultural capital and a strong ideology of return, our participants' desire to relocate to a country to which they have always felt bonded by family ties and ethnic ancestry can be seen as a project of existential return to the ancestral homeland. Because of this emic reading of return, we deploy the term in defiance of the statistical meaning.

Anther important issue is the remarkable silence on second-generation return in the now-burgeoning literature on migrant transnationalism. Of course, there are exceptions – Smith's exemplary *Mexican New York* (2006) for example, which, within its broad 'transnational lives' approach, follows some of the second generation back to their Oaxacan hometown. Whilst this is a rich and finely-written ethnography, with extensive fieldwork in New York and southern Mexico, most of the returns are regular visits rather than long-term resettlement. Likewise, Cressey's *Diaspora Youth and Ancestral Homeland* (2006), a study of British Pakistani youth visiting their parental birth-place, does not tackle the question of 'real' settlement, despite the anecdotal evidence of such moves taking place (Wajid, 2006). A third exception is the US-based collection edited by Levitt and Waters (2002), with case-study chapters on Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Filipino, Vietnamese and West Indian second-generation links to parental homelands. Yet again, none of these case-studies looks at definitive 'return', reflecting the hubris of American immigration scholarship where there is a kind of 'myth of non-return' (King, 2000, p. 28) and an assumption of eventual assimilation. Closer to our interest in longer-term return is a recent strand of European literature on second-generation 'roots' migration from Switzerland to southern Italy (Wessendorf, 2007) and on British-born Caribbean-heritage young adults relocating to Barbados and Jamaica (Phillips and Potter, 2005, 2009; Potter and Phillips, 2006, 2008; Reynolds, 2008). Meanwhile, parallel research on second-generation returns from the extensive Greek diaspora is also emerging – Panagakos (2003) on returning Greek-Canadians, Tsolidis (2009) on the return of the daughters of Greek emigrants in North America and Australia, and Unger (1986) on the return of German-born children to Greece when their parents repatriated in the wake of the 1970s oil crisis.

3. Greek migration to Germany

The part of the Greek diaspora that has taken root in Germany can be seen in a dual context: as the last phase of the historically deep and geographically wide process of 'scattering' of the Greek diaspora; and as part of the recruitment of 'guestworkers' into Germany in the 1960s and early 1970s, characterised by Cohen (1997) as a *labour diaspora*, rather than one created by forced exile, imperial colonisation or trade.

Estimates of the total Greek diaspora today range between 3 and 7 million, the discrepancy largely due to whether the figure is limited to the so-called 'migratory diasporas' since the late-nineteenth century to the USA, Canada, Australia and Western Europe, or includes the 'historical diasporas' resulting from much earlier colonisations of territories not subsequently incorporated into the modern Greek state (Tatsoglou, 2009, p. 8). More relevant to this paper are the scale and direction of postwar migration. Between 1945 and 1973 one in six of the Greek population emigrated. In the early postwar years most went to North America and Australia. From 1960, West Germany became the dominant destination, accounting for almost 60% of the 1 million emigrants who left before the end of 1973 (Fakiolas and King, 1996, pp. 172–174), when Germany halted migrant labour recruitment. Considerable return migration took place, but the Greek diaspora in Germany was sustained by ongoing family reunification and the birth of the second generation. Labour migration resumed, albeit on a smaller scale, after Greece joined the European Community in 1981.

Greek emigration to Germany was classic labour migration structured by international wage and labour-market imbalances. In Greece high unemployment, bare subsistence incomes and the quest for political freedom (especially during the military junta's rule, 1967–1974) were the main driving factors. Greece was one of a group of Southern European countries that supplied manual labour, via intergovernmental recruitment agreements, to key

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sectors of Germany's growing industrial economy. Greek emigration to Germany, from all parts of the country, was especially high from the poorer rural northern regions. Returnees, on the other hand, were disproportionately drawn to the two largest cities, Athens and Thessaloniki, and to regional towns, rather than back to depopulated villages (Unger, 1981) – a pattern followed by the more recent flow of second-generation returns.

Two other features of Greek migration to Germany are of note, and impinge on the findings we present later. The first concerns the evolving gender balance. Like most European labour migrations of this era, males were the majority, reflecting the nature of guest-worker recruitment and the available employment in factory and construction work. This meant also that there were many marriages between Greek migrant men and German women. But the Greek migrant flow soon contained many women (38% of migrants during 1960–1973), mostly married and arriving with, or joining, their husbands. They, too, largely migrated to work, especially in electrical goods factories; their level of employment has remained higher than that of other immigrant nationalities, and indeed of German women (Kontos, 2009, p. 35). Industrial restructuring led many Greek migrants into self-employment, especially in the family-run restaurant trade.

The second distinctive feature – not unconnected with the first – is the (widespread according to our interviewees) practice of sending young children back to Greece to be looked after by relatives. The rationale was twofold: it enabled both parents to work full-time, and it meant their children would not be disadvantaged by a lack of Greek education and culture should the often-never-executed plan to return to Greece after a few years materialise (Matzouranis, 1985; Unger, 1986). Several interviewees had experienced being shuttled back and forth between two very different familial, linguistic and social settings at crucial stages of their lives, the encounter with such contrasting diasporic landscapes more real than the idealised constructions of the homeland bequeathed by family narratives or even directly experienced on holiday visits.

4. Articulating diasporic landscapes: topographies of identity, home and belonging

Interest in landscape has grown considerably in recent years and the spectrum of approaches to its study is remarkably broad (Muir, 1999). However, the 'cultural turn' in geography since the 1970s has led to new ideas about symbolism and landscape heavily influenced by post-modernist scholars (Cosgrove, 1989; Kobayashi, 1989). Such an approach has focused on the powerfully evocative depictions of landscapes that highlight consciousness, perception and values, qualities not easily quantified and thus requiring an approach that can 'read' and interpret landscape textually as ideology and symbol. Significant in this 'reading' is the fact that identities are also constructed in response to place and landscape. As Basu (2007, p. vii) explains, diasporic identity is defined by its relationship to an 'other landscape', an 'elsewhere', which is both a definable, physical territory and a 'symbolic' landscape. Yet, for migrants and those living in diaspora, place and landscape often have an unusually ambiguous and flexible relationship to home – important, but in ways that are contingent on how mobility intersects with life-stage and generations, and on views of the materiality of 'home' and of the 'home-land' (Basu, 2001).

'Home' can be conceived as both the destination and the journey; as both 'home' and 'homing'. Migrants' 'claim to place' is produced imaginatively and cognitively in transnational space – discovered and cherished but also contested, dismantled and perhaps ultimately rejected. The search for 'home' can produce fractured subjectivities and multiple identities (Bondi, 1993) because particular power relations – notably the patriarchy of the 'traditional' Greek family in Germany – and essentialised notions of ethno-national belonging (again, important in the Greek diaspora) are sustained despite the contrapuntal optimism of the 'post-national' self (Hedetoft and Hjort, 2002). Thus 'home' in the substance of the (Greek) nation offers ontological security in a world of movement and displacement (Rapport and Dawson, 1998). At the same time – especially for young second-generation women – the 'Greek homeland' offers a potential escape-chute from the oppressive patriarchy of the Greek-German migrant family (cf. Panagakos, 2003; Tsolidis, 2009). Meanwhile, globalisation and migrancy are seen both as a threat to identity and hence to the stability and comfort that 'being at home' promises, and as facilitators or expressions of much transnational activity enabling a search for a new 'home'. Return migration has always been a feature of the Greek labour migration to Germany, but return mobilities were given new impetus by the accession of Greece to the European Community in 1981 and the consequent removal of all barriers to back-and-forth movement. When boundaries and borders seem to be eroding, what defines meaning is the internalisation of such landscapes that mark 'salience of self' for migrants because they are tangible – they can be inhabited and not just imagined.

5. Methods

Our key research instrument was the life-story or personal narrative, usually recounted over two or more hours. The main narrative encounter took place after an initial meeting to explain some essential background to the research, gain participants' consent to be recorded, and fix the appointment for the main event. Narratives were recorded with minimal intervention from the interviewer (Christou). Sometimes the 'vow of silence' worked and the narrative flow was more or less continuous; in other instances, prompts and very generalised questions were required to stimulate participant testimonials.

Given our emphasis on second-generation relocation to the Greek 'homeland', the narratives are mainly about spatial mobility, places and landscapes in Germany and Greece, and senses of home, belonging and identification there (Christou, 2009). But they also express different balances and interactions between individual agency and broader structures, so that some represent essentialised received wisdom about 'Greekness' and the diasporic homeland, some are more individualised expressions of identity, placement and belonging, and others narrate hybrid mixes of the two forms.

Although this research is explicitly qualitative, based on close reading and analysis of the narratives, we need to be equally explicit about the scale of the research effort. Fieldwork took place in three stages, over eleven months, in sites across Greek-German diasporic space. A pilot phase in Athens was followed by a period in Berlin, and then a final, longer stage in Greece, comprising interviews with 30 second generationers in Athens, Thessaloniki, Volos and elsewhere. The purpose of the Berlin fieldwork, during which more than 20 interviews with first- and second-generation Greeks were accomplished, was to get a sense of how the Greek community in one large German city had evolved, and how Greek ethnicity and family life were expressed there, thus contextualising our interpretation of second-generation participants' accounts of their relocation to Greece. In our narrative extracts, participants are given pseudonyms. Other bio-data – age, gender, migration history, location of interviews – are given where appropriate.

In the following sections, we set out ways in which diasporic landscapes are narrativised by our participants. As second-generation returnees visualise, narrate and negotiate the abstract landscapes of their minds and the pragmatic landscapes of their

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experiences, multiple identities unfold. We now discuss three subthemes:

- *landscapes of roots and routes* – how family history, mobility and 'return' create landscapes of identification;
- *landscapes of memory* – transcultural lives and ethno-landscapes of the nation;
- *landscapes of escape and (dis)placement* – how the return project can both reflect and create landscapes of exclusion and alienation rather than of comfort and belonging.

6. Landscapes of roots and routes: identities and mobilities

As Cohen has pointed out (1997, pp. 177–178), there is a strong agricultural or gardening trope in accounts and framings of diaspora, which so often speak of native soil, roots and family trees. The products of this soil are unfailingly regarded as 'authentic' and 'genuine' and follow the migrants in their diasporic routes, either informally when they return from homeland visits, or traded commercially as 'nostalgia goods', especially foodstuff. Rebecca, 41, a second-generation Greek-German living in Athens, described how, during her childhood in Germany, the family would visit Greece every summer and return laden with local produce:

> Every year ... a traditional Greek-German vacation by car, so you can carry all the things you want to carry ... three days in a car bringing all that Greek stuff back to Germany ... litres of olive oil, wine, and cheese and God knows what ... that you can't bring on the plane.

Stelios, in Volos, was a second-generation Greek-German who had been sent back to Greece for part of his early childhood and was then brought back to Germany to continue his education. He reminisces about the material goods sent between the two countries, binding together the two fragments of his transnational family:

> ... that's how I grew up: with aunts and grandmothers in Greece while my mother and father were working in factories in Germany. It may sound a bit harsh nowadays but ... it was reality to a lot of kids ... From Germany they sent us Adidas T-shirts, a cassette player, a TV set [...] My mother couldn't bear the separation so they took me to Germany ... One day a parcel arrived from Greece, I remember the smell of oregano; a book was included. It was the book which first-graders begin with in the Greek elementary school, the one about Mimis and Lola. My parents beat the crap out of me to learn Greek ... That book has haunted me ever since.

Other participants focused more on their memories of the visual landscape and the climate. According to Persephone (27, 2G, Athens):

> Greece has 1,001 things to offer ... the sun, the sea ... and landscapes which I never thought existed ... green countryside and lots more. No, Greece is a beautiful country: I would never go back to Germany.

Iakovos (58, 1G, Berlin), meanwhile, contrasted the Greek and German landscapes:

> Look, in Greece a Greek has his house, his village, his garden and his own environment ... Yesterday I went on an excursion ... to see the surroundings of Berlin. We went to a village, there was a tower ... nice, but we have grown up with a different kind of nature, with other colours and feelings. When I enter these woods [near Berlin] with trees 50 metres high, I get depressed, scared ... I prefer open stretches of land, the sea, and the little boat in the Mediterranean.

If villages, the sea, soil and farm produce represent a clear, stable geographical manifestation of the homeland landscape, another common representation is the 'Greek heritage' of ancient history. This sense of pride in historical greatness was present in many essentialised narratives of diasporic identity, as Iakovos demonstrates:

> ... because Greece for Germans ... is associated with Ancient Greece ... Greece is a model for them. If you take a look at German children's books in school you'll see there are lots of pages on Ancient Greece.

Diasporic landscapes, then, are both real and imaginative landscapes of home and belonging. In imagining the homeland as a space of comfort and a cure for ambivalence in restoring a more stable sense of self, participants often strategically mobilise a hierarchical greatness of their roots, privilege the quality of the Greek landscape and climate over the German, or refer to the 'superiority' of Greek culture and family life. For Pavlos, in Athens, who comes from a mixed marriage (German mother, Greek father), the Greek ethnic element prevails in his identification project because it exemplifies cherished core family and cultural values:

> I would say that deep inside me I feel Greek. Out of respect for my mother who is German I sometimes say that I have German roots but I am Greek, I could not be anything else. I could have said I was German since I have German citizenship and a German passport, I have everything; yet ... there isn't anything of greater importance than to say what you are. I am Greek and I like it ... Let me justify this. I consider that the Greek language is a language with no beginning or end ... I feel proud of the history of Greece, and ... I can't but feel proud of the everyday life we experience in Greece which may be harsh in relation to that in Germany but it's more humane. I believe that people here still have families. ... they grow up having a certain model of family in their mind ... the young generation will still visit their mother and father, they have contact with their family. In Germany this doesn't happen any more ... Here, if mum and dad could stay upstairs while we live [in the flat] under them it would be perfect.

Pavlos' interview reads like an extract from the 2002 blockbuster film *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, which took on a life of its own as a meta-commentary of the superiority of Greek family life in the diaspora (Anagnostou, 2003). But the relocation route to the ancestral homeland often exacerbates the complexity of identification. The experience of return can often be traumatic (as we shall see later) and can further fracture what has been extensively discussed in the literature as the intricacy of hybrid, hyphenated and multiple identities which are relational, constructed and situational (Chambers, 1994; Rapport and Dawson, 1998). Here, Rebecca reflects on her own relocation from Germany to Greece and explores her identity challenges. Like Pavlos, her case is interesting because of the 'double duality' of her ethnic background (Greek father, German mother) and her migration trajectory (born in Germany, living in Greece). First, she describes the existential impact that split identification had on her as a result of her family asking what she preferred to be and what was better.

> So there was a long, long time in my life until my mid-thirties ... until I figured out, 'Listen, you're just Rebecca. You're not Greek, you're not German, you're not whatever the hell you are. This is yourself and that's what it is' ... I'll never turn into a Greek woman. I cannot. I can understand them, I can understand the culture and the mentality, but I'll never be one of them. Meanwhile I don't feel split any more, I just do fine.

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However, in contrast to Pavlos' essentialised account of his Greekness, Rebecca's articulation of identity is more nuanced and autonomous. Asked if this process of self-identification is traumatic or painful, Rebecca responds:

> No. It *was* though. There was a time when it was painful and extremely difficult ... This whole process triggered the idea that there is something else to deal with [and] I decided to relocate to Greece in order to put myself into some relation with it. But not with the intention to become Greek ... It has helped a lot though ... I can see these things I never knew.

Our participant narratives confirm contemporary theorisations whereby migrant identities are partly formed by and through the journey, and the sense of 'home' also shaped through migrancy (Chambers, 1994; Papastergiadis, 2000). Pavlos' and Rebecca's cases are fascinating as they are two differing subjectivities of a similar trajectory. An important aspect of such subjective constructions of identity is temporality, a core expression of which – the role of memory in the emergence of landscapes of nation, self and place, set within a variety of peripatetic and diasporic lives – is discussed next.

7. Diasporic landscapes of memory: nation, place and peripatetic lives

Here we interrogate whether participants' recollections of the past construct particular landscapes of place and feelings of belongingness to the ethnic place of origin. We also highlight the conditions under which a sense of (dis)location and (dis)placement is shaped by particular memories, focusing first on the case of Petros, a 38-year-old second-generation 'returnee' to Thessaloniki with multiple experiences of return – twice to Greece and once to Germany. He was born and educated in Stuttgart until he was fourteen. But his father decided that they should leave and at Christmas 1984 they relocated to the small town in northern Greece from where his family comes. After graduating from the local high school, Petros studied engineering, served his two-year army duty and, as he could not find employment in Greece, moved back to Stuttgart aged 25. He then relocated to Greece, this time to Thessaloniki, four years ago.

Echoing Ahmed et al. (2003), Petros described the multiple relocations in his life as 'uprootings', and the 'uprooted' self is clearly embedded in nostalgia. For Petros, it is a two-way nostalgia for two places at different stages of his still-young life. Nostalgia acts as a marker of identification: 'a type of autobiographical memory, crucial in the formation and maintenance of personal identity' (Deciu Ritivoi, 2002, p. 30). Yet, etymologically, 'nostalgia' is about the pain (*algos*) that one feels for the homeland (*nostos*); inevitably it mobilises memory in order to reconstruct the lost 'home'. As Baldassar writes (2001, p. 72), 'each memento of migration is a shrine to nostalgia and a comment on journeying, migrancy and *nostos*'. There seems to be a symbiotic relationship between the emotive, the experiential and the memorialised senses of homeness or homelessness. Petros talked extensively of his encounters with memory, dreams and emotions:

> In the way I have lived and experienced things it gets very emotional because I have been uprooted twice, as a child and as a young adult ... I came back from Germany four years ago and my dreams are still of ... people from Germany, friends, professionally ... Of course many Greek people also appear in my dreams. It is a strange world ... On the one hand this is good, on the other it is difficult because every day ... I feel different. If you were to ask me now if I am German or Greek I would say I feel 50.0001 percent that I am German and 49.999 ... that I am Greek. I do not dare say even 51 percent...

He then embarked on a riff about nostalgia:

> Nostalgia [is] reminiscence for everything, for life, for the life you lived, for the life you would like to have lived, [but] you cannot ... When you are there you reminisce for the one thing, when you are here you reminisce for the other and it is a vicious circle ... People who ... grow up with two languages, they have this ... this curse ... It is like having grown up without knowing who your parents are in a way. And you wonder, 'Who are they? Who is the mother? Who is the father? Can I find them? Will I ever be at peace?' You are never at peace. This is nostalgia ... You are constantly searching and you will never find a point where you will say, 'This is it'.

Petros then explained his most recent return to Greece to be with his sick father:

> And I made a decision which I have never regretted ... a decision for which I am proud in a way because I took into consideration the persons I love first of all. I was not the pure-bred German who would say 'I will go see how my father is doing and I will come back again'. If I were the pure-bred German I would return to my job again after a while, which was something they had proposed. They told me, 'Go and see your father and we will be waiting for you. Don't worry'... Let me tell you one more thing. If it weren't for my parents I would probably never have returned to Greece. This is what ties you... it is the emotions.

Petros' lengthy narrative is rich in expressions of nostalgia, memory, place and nation, culminating with the importance of family ties – ultimately the strongest motivation for his most recent return to the homeland. Reflecting his life fractured into segments by sudden decisions not entirely of his own making, his account jumps back and forth, and switches in its emotional register between anger, compromise and contemplation. His is a double nostalgia which is all the more painful, evocative of two nations, two ways of life. His constant striving to understand 'who he is' reflects an individualist rather than an essentialist construction of his autobiography; however, unlike Rebecca, also an individualist, who had resolved her 'Greek vs German' dilemma in a self-satisfying way, Petros continued to be tormented by the curse of his double identity and dual allegiance to place, as well as bound by Greek family loyalty to being with his father.

Petros' migration experience has been one of peripatetic movement – both real and imagined – seemingly always in search of grounding. Not all such itinerant life stories of children 'sent back' to Germany were as painful. Lydia described life in Greece with her grandparents as 'lovely', and makes references to the idealised Greek landscape, its products, colours and smells.

> Looking back I think I had a lovely childhood in the village with my grandparents who kind of replaced my parents. My grandmother raised me beautifully and thus years later when I was in Germany, there was one thing that still attracted me in Greece: the colours and the smells stored in my mind since my childhood ... I remember the light green colour of trees in the summer, the dried land. I grew up poorly, I didn't have many toys, there wasn't even a bathroom inside our house; the toilet was outside in the yard. But I had many friends, we played every day out in the streets and I think that has helped me a lot, shaped my personality...
> [...]
> I remember the day my father came to take me to Germany ... it was the first time I was in an airplane. I wanted to go to Germany without really knowing what that meant. My parents told me that it would be difficult at first ... I did not speak German...
> [...]

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> Besides my studies, there was a long period of self-quest: What is important to me? What does it mean to me being a Greek woman in Germany? The[ir] role ... is a far cry from the role of Greek women in Greece. It was a great dilemma for me. My parents were very strict in order to protect me. They wouldn't allow me to go to parties etc. They told me that a girl must be a virgin and not to get involved with a German boy because we would be leaving soon. I took my time trying to solve those dilemmas ... Many of them still remain unsolved but it's OK now, I live with them.

In the narratives of Petros, Lydia and earlier, Stelios we discover that cultural elements standing as markers of a 'Greek' identity are very important; parents and other relatives make particular efforts to transmit knowledge of the Greek language and practice of Greek values. For Lydia, issues of virginal 'purity' were very important to her parents, as was linguistic purity for Stelios' parents, who 'beat the crap out of him' to learn Greek from the primer sent, with a bunch of oregano, from Greece.

8. Landscapes of escape and (dis)placement: exclusion instead of belonging?

In the last section we focus on how the return project can both result from and create landscapes of exclusion, marginalisation and alienation instead of comfort, home and belonging. If we examine the dialectics of home and diaspora, we observe that the postmodern condition of displacement often creates a sense of 'unhomeliness' and hence estrangement of 'home' (Agnew, 2005; Bender and Winer, 2001; Brah, 1996; Markovitz and Stefansson, 2004; Rapport and Dawson, 1998). In our research this condition occurs when participants engage with a project of identification shaped by a fragmentation of (dis)locations of 'home' in two particular spaces, their birth-place homeland and their ancestral homeland.

We start with examples of alienation from the second generation's birth-place, Germany. Here the 'push factor' for the move to Greece was not so much Germany or German society (even if there were many complaints about the German climate); rather – especially for females – it was the claustrophobic social and familial environment of the Greek migrant community, with its suffocating patriarchy and 'rules' of conduct and behaviour. Such rules banned teenage girls from going out, requiring them instead to work after school in the home or family business. Religious observance and the need to attend additional classes at the Greek school added to children's obligations. Evanthia (27, 2G, Berlin) described her parents' social background as labour migrants arriving in Greece:

> Maybe what they say about migrants are clichés or labels ... but I believe it is true ... Because people who lived abroad, I am talking about those who first came as migrants, tried to preserve their relations with their country; they lived in a totally different environment and they had to struggle for their integration into their new environment, and on the other hand preserve their Greek identity ... This is shown in their customs and traditions like going to church or raising their children in a certain way ... maybe because they wanted to protect them from the foreign environment, the children were more disciplined, more controlled...

Next, Cologne-born Natalia (36, 2G, Thessaloniki) reminisces about the conservative and idealised representation of Greek identity embodied in her father:

> All those years they were labourers in factories, always getting low wages. From a very young age, I remember they always talked about our country ... My father is adamant about his Greek identity. He is persistent that if one makes money it has to be invested in Greece ... He has tried to pass these ideas down to us ... When I was 14 I got a job at a fast-food restaurant which belonged to a relative. That meant I would go to school in the morning but in the afternoon I would go to a dentist's since I was trying to finish my training as a dentist's apprentice ... which meant a minimum 3–4 hours at the dentist's ... and I had to change clothes and start work at the restaurant from seven to eleven. It was a schedule which was very tough for someone at the age of 14, 15 and that went on until I was 19 when I came to Greece.

Accounts of escape, (dis)placement and exclusion can be multi-generational, as the attachment to/repulsion from birth-place and 'homeland' bounce back and forth across migrant generations both 'here' and 'there'. Anna, a second-generation Greek-German living in Greece, referred to the borders of exclusion and surveillance that her mother experienced in the homeland due to her leftist activist practices in an era of authoritarianism in Greece. This painful past has also shaped Anna's identity trajectory which, despite the family history of exclusion, is marked by a strong pull towards Greece.

> I had a great liking for Greece ... the Greek culture which I imagined in the way I wanted to ... At a certain point in time, after having lived in Germany ... I felt the powerful desire to return and so I am here today.

Anna then refers to the sense of 'freedom' she was pursuing in defining her identity, but could not 'locate' in Germany (see also Panagakos, 2003; Tsolidis, 2009). However, she finds that the price to pay is enormous, as the glimpse of freedom disappears through immersion into the reality of everyday life in Greece. Yet, she never considers relocating back to Germany.

> First of all nothing functions in the same way as we are accustomed to in Germany, where that which is worthy advances; on a social level nothing operates here. In all areas. In every respect. Even those things which at first seemed to be so romantic ... the voices on the buses in contrast with the silence of the German way of life – all of this is not so ... Things do not shine as they did at the beginning. Despite this I love them and despite this I never thought for a moment – I have been in Greece for five, six years and everyone used to say to me that for the first six years you will always have your suitcase near the door – but I have not even for a moment missed ... my friends [and] Germany.

Virtually all our second-generation 'returnees' told similar stories of the objective difficulties of living in Greece, where chaos, corruption, rudeness and clientelism frustrate so many aspects of life (not least finding a decent job), and are contrasted with the order, efficiency, politeness and meritocracy of society in Germany. For Anna, other aspects of the Greek diaspora homeland experience – landscapes and soundscapes, a profoundly ontological sense of belonging – override the disappointments. For others, the balance shifts the other way: despite the climate, scenery, sea and relaxed attitudes to life, the 'Greek experience' suffers compared to the German one and some re-evaluate Germany as their alternative homeland. The case of Evanthia is particularly interesting as she is a 'double returnee' – she returned to her parents' village in northern Greece to live with her grandmother for two years, followed by university study in Thessaloniki. She then returned to Berlin where, as she explains, it was easier to find work:

> Through this decision of mine to go to Greece and living there for eight years, I also got to know my own identity. Well, basically I always knew about my identity because I always felt Greek and I know I will be Greek for the rest of my life. The only difference was that before I went to Greece when I lived in

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Germany, I couldn't be fond of Germany ... I regarded Germany as the reason that kept me away from my country; so I considered Germany an opponent. Nevertheless, after I had lived in Greece I could compare the two countries ... and I finally saw that Germany is not my rival; through this process I was able to – I don't want to say love – but to appreciate, yes, to come to terms with Germany.

Evanthia's account is a good example of the 'hybrid' narrative form, which mixes elements of essentialised Greekness ('I always felt Greek', and repeated references to Greece as 'my country' despite her not being born there and only living there a relatively short time) with the shifting positionality of a 'floater' – Evanthia moves back and forth between Germany and Greece, and uses her Greek experience to reappraise her relationship with her birth-country, Germany.

Other second-generation interviewees were more specific about aspects of everyday life and landscape in Greece. Zoe (28) expressed her shock at the untidy urban landscape of Thessaloniki when she first arrived, drawing contrasts with the green environment of Germany, which she hadn't appreciated before:

When I came to Thessaloniki, I was extremely shocked, I thought I was in a ghetto ... I mean narrow streets with too many apartment buildings and lots of garbage ... I remember the first day: there was garbage everywhere, cats, stray animals, I was totally distressed ... When I went to Germany, the first time I returned to Germany, I saw there was a world of difference. I mean I saw things that I hadn't noticed ... the green ... Here [in Greece] you get stressed ... just from the environment.

She then expresses other aspects of disillusionment with Greece, including a final fashioning of a self-scripted, individualised synthesis of her sense of identity and belonging:

What is tiring for me is that you have to beg to be given what you're entitled to; there is no system or substructure. Everyone tries to live on the sly ... there is barely a day that I don't think that in Germany I was better off in terms of almost everything ... I think of Germany very often and I look forward to going there ... OK, I grew up there and I consider Hamburg my home-town much more than here ... So when I go to Germany, it is as if I go home.

[...]

Personally, I feel I am torn in two; I can't say I belong; I can't say I'm either a pure German or a pure Greek; I am something in-between, and I am never going to become an authentic Greek just because I live here. The German element will always be there, and I believe that all people of Greek descent who return feel they are in-between; they are people with no homeland, in essence. You adopt elements whether you want to or not, elements from both countries, so we are the in-between, let's say.

For typical expressions of disillusionment about everyday behaviour and racism towards recent immigrants we turn to Fani:

There is no respect among people the way there is in Germany ... Unimportant things, I mean just when you say thank you to the kiosk man when he gives you the change ... they are not used to it; however in Germany, wherever an employee may work, he is polite, not because he is obliged to but because he wants to, that's what he has learned to do.

[...]

We [i.e. as second-generation 'returnees'] don't have the racist element that Greeks have here ... In Germany because we were foreigners amongst foreigners it was natural for us to accept them and for them to accept us ... I believe there is too much racism [here in Greece], and that annoys me very much; I mean I don't care if foreigners are from Albania, Africa, whatever, I think it [the racism here] is too much (22, 2G, Thessaloniki).

Greek society, it seems, does not stop at venting racism only on those who are manifestly 'others'; many interviewees said they were made to feel 'inferior' and 'different' because their 'foreign' background set them apart from the 'pure' Greeks who had lived all their lives in the 'fatherland'. Natalia complained of an 'ironic approach' towards her and her fellow diaspora returnees:

... they have given us the name 'village Germans' ... During the first years in Greece I heard this all the time, I was incredibly annoyed ... now I have kind of gotten over it, but it still annoys me...

The term 'village Germans' refers to postwar emigrants' rural origins and a traditional mentality which has stayed with them in exile and is assumed to have been passed on to the next generation. In an earlier extract, we heard Natalia's description of the social origins of her parents, the hard life they followed as factory workers in Germany, and her father's unwavering loyalty to his essential, Greek identity.

In Natalia's case the move to Greece was partially stimulated by an emotional desire and curiosity to live in the country idealised by her father, and his wish – almost a command – that she marry a Greek, not a German. Eventually, she fell in love with and married a Greek she met whilst on holiday in Greece. The marriage produced two children but ended after seven years. The final act of Natalia's profound disaffection with Greek society is a determination to raise her children 'the German way':

I have trained my son and daughter into adopting a certain kind of behaviour. I have taught them to get what they want themselves, to have their own space, to keep it clean, to familiarise themselves with what work means, to be able to handle money, to know that things are not so easy like friends of theirs who make demands and ask for things from the parents. I have taught them these things ... For instance we get up at this time, and they learn that there is a right time for everything ... and that slackness and looseness are not good qualities ... I am very strict and I believe they may get sad and hurt sometimes but I believe all this will be in their best interest in the future, just like it was for me.

Thus we see a new, transnational, transgenerational cycle initiated: second-generation returnees become, in effect, a new first generation of foreign-born Greeks settling in Greece, whose children become, in their turn, a new second generation with their own transnational links back to their parents' other homeland, Germany, where their grandparents, the original first-generation emigrants, may still live.

9. Discussion

In discussing identities and relocation projects of the second generation there is undoubtedly an abundance of experiences and outcomes, which pose a challenge to rigorous generalisation. The very experience of migration is a process involving not only new experiences but also new windows, new outlooks into the seemingly similar but inherently different diasporic homeland and its people. We understand that, for both the first and the second generation, but in different ways, the self is divided between 'home' and 'diaspora'; return migration may, or may not, unite the two. Space is thus not a passive container of identification but a dynamic translocal site of intra- and inter-subjective cultural encounters. The ambiguous view of 'home' (Where is it? What does

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it mean?) signifies that 'homecoming' is not a static state of being but a fluid process of 'becoming', a journey into spaces of selfhood.

We have heard, from the voices of the participants, how the second generation's relocation to the ethnic homeland results from a mix of factors: an emotional or ontological search for 'home' and identity; an escape from a family environment sometimes too traditionally Greek; a fulfilment of the family narrative of eventual return; and an act triggered by personal or kinship relationships. Yet the reception on relocating to the homeland was rarely an undiluted warm and welcoming embrace. Reactions to this vary. Some, like Persephone, are able to ignore or counter the negativity with an overriding satisfaction at having achieved the dream of living in her beloved Greece. Others, like Evanthia, react by moving back to Germany, while 'returnees' like Natalia adapt and compromise, although not without tremendous difficulty and sacrifice, and a devastating critique of what is wrong with Greece:

> Greece has something which is a gift from God. It is situated where the climate is fantastic, it has the nicest islands with amazing beaches, and so many things. All these are very nice and positive for Greece but I consider all these were given to Greece by God. It's not as if Greece itself has acquired something ... With regard to the negative elements, everything else is negative ... I don't know where to start and where to finish. Where should I start from? The non-existent education, the safety that does not exist, the hospitals that are supposed to be built but are non-existent? It's a vicious circle and you feel like a pig in a sty covered in mud, and the comparison [with Germany] is unavoidable.

Clearly, Natalia sees herself as a woman 'out of place', who has ended up, in her own words, in the 'wrong country'. Her possible return to Germany is compromised by the need for her children to keep in touch with their father. For 40-year-old Vaios, Germany and Greece exist side-by-side in a more harmonious relationship and, in this final quote, we hear a rationalisation of how the 'bad' things in Greece are also, in some senses, positive; and how the two elements of Vaios' identity and belonging fit together in a complementary way.

> The cons everybody knows: chaos, lack of organisation, the fact that I will have to make twice the effort to do something and the outcome will pretty much depend on the civil servant's mood. I mean that's what everybody's complaining about, not just the people who came from abroad. The difference is that we have seen that there's a way to make things work ... The pros are cons at the same time. I mean the lack of clearly drawn lines is also a way to save time escaping bureaucracy, provided you can find someone who can help you. The pros include the Greek personality: Greeks are happy people, cheerful towards life ... and I like the weather!
>
> [...]
>
> I am Greek, that's how I define myself. I have German elements in me which I do not intend to reject. That's who I am and I like having these elements. I don't view Germany as a foreign country. It is not just a country I used to live in, it is more like a homeland too ... Maybe I could say that Greece is my A-class home, Germany is my B-class home, something like that ... I do not feel torn in two, not at all, it's more like two-in-one.

10. Conclusion

We end our paper by assessing the significance of our analysis for the wider fields of diaspora studies, identities and belonging. We address three aspects: the uniqueness of our case-study; the methodology used; and the utility of the concept of diasporic landscapes.

This article is the first to explore the contemporary phenomenon of the 'return' of adult second-generation Greeks from Germany. One important earlier study of second-generation return in this specific geographic context looked mainly at the experience of returnee children (Unger, 1986), whilst prior studies of second-generation Greek return have focused on longer-distance returns from the older-established Greek diasporas in North America, Australia and Africa (Christou, 2006; Christou and King, 2006; Panagakos, 2003; Petronoti, 2009; Tsolidis, 2009). Moving beyond Greece, we again note that most of the small but growing literature on second-generation return consists of long-distance and transcontinental case-studies – Levitt and Waters (2002), Potter and Phillips (2006, 2008), Reynolds (2008). Along with Wessendorf's (2007) recent study of second-generation Swiss-Italians returning to southern Italy, ours is one of the first to address second-generation return in an intra-European migration context.

Second, we want to reflect on our methodology. The use of life stories as a process of 'narrativisation' of migrant paths and identities enables participants to speak about, and possibly bring order to, the multitude of fragmented experiences that constitute their lives. In this article, participants narrated and re-addressed their personal projects of return and identification. Their life stories reflect their everyday life, mundane and eventful, their dreams (and nightmares), and how their diasporic experiences constitute meaning for them. Instead of seeing life history as 'pure' representation and documentation, their narratives should be viewed theoretically and empirically as mappings of experiential (inter)subjectivities that open up new spaces for individual migrants to be understood as active and reactive social subjects. In this context, the researcher is not simply the channel through which the knowledge of these diasporic worlds and landscapes is uncovered, but is also a co-constructor of such knowledge – by the framing of the original research questions, and by the way these questions are translated, articulated and prompted in the narrative setting. The importance of self-reflexivity in social research, especially in field research involving encounters which are not just person-to-person but also gendered, classed, power-laden and transcultural, has been extensively debated in the literature, and has become controversial. Some see the reflexive approach in a negative light, as a 'term to justify excessive self-indulgence', whilst others see it as 'a key precondition for good academic work' (Plummer, 2001, p. 207). We favour the latter view. Our greatest methodological challenge was the 'recruitment' of male participants. Such 'borders' are reflective of gendered power relations in field research (Browne, 2003) and the fact that the (female) interviewer (Christou) had difficulties in getting male participants to 'commit'. In order to achieve something approaching gender parity in our sample, proportionally much more effort was devoted to accessing male respondents.

Thirdly, our notion of diasporic landscapes introduces a material, spatial and aesthetic dimension into which experiences of diasporic living and 'return' are set. For these 'returnees', references to landscapes and locales are both visual and sensed, real and imagined, and constitute the lived experience and idealised imagination of a place, 'its sounds and smells, its heat and dust, [and] balmy summer evenings' (Brah, 1996, p. 192). Our research has been about instances of everyday diasporic life in multiple locations; about life stories, relocations, places and landscapes. However, life stories should not be viewed as simply reflecting diasporic living and movement between diaspora spaces, but as creative and constructive interpretations of such lives and mobility projects in particular social, national and ethnic contexts – in the past, the present and potentially in the future. They provide insights into complex concepts such as 'home', 'belonging' and 'identity' and their significance for geography and social science should not be overlooked.

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