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Context of the research

Within migration and diaspora studies, the second generation has unusually complex and ambiguous views of home, identity and 'where they belong'. Moreover, their connection to the 'homeland' – where their parents were born and lived before they emigrated – has been little researched. Now, demographic data from various parts of the world with a history of postwar mass emigration (such as Greece and Cyprus) show that second-generation return is a growing phenomenon. This project, built around a comparative study of returning Greek-Americans, Greek-Germans and British-born Greek Cypriots, will shed new light on how diasporas, migration and identities are conceptualised and understood.

Another important context is the 'migration reversal' of Greece and Cyprus: from mass emigration in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s (Greece mainly to North America and Germany, Cyprus mainly to the UK), to mass immigration since the 1980s (from Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Asia). This confronts the returning second generation with a dramatically changing homeland.

Our research questions include:

- How are images of the 'homeland' constructed and passed on to the second generation in the diaspora?
- What is the role of short 'home-country' visits in the learning process about the homeland and its potential selection as a 'place to be'?
- How do the returnees react to the discovery that the 'pure' Greece (or Cyprus) of their received memory (from parents' stories, holiday visits etc.) has been fundamentally altered by globalisation and mass immigration in recent years?
- To what extent is the very notion of diaspora transformed by the return of the second generation as a 'counter-diaspora' – reversing the 'scattering'?
- How does the second generation's return change the meaning and boundaries of their identities: their sense of 'who they are' and of where 'home' is?

Aims, objectives and methods

The overarching research aim is to explore the second generation's return and their complex and ambivalent identities and views of home. Specific objectives include:

- comparative analysis of second-generation 'home-comings' of three instructively-chosen groups;
- understanding how identities and belonging are contested and performed in private and public

settings;

- methodological innovation in the rigorous collection of oral and written personal narratives.

The research is multi-sited and multi-method. Following a life-story approach, we will collect 90 narrative accounts, 30 from each group, during fieldwork in Greece and Cyprus. In addition, we will interview ethnic community leaders and key informants, both in the places of return and in selected 'source' migration sites (London, New York, Berlin). Focus-group discussions amongst second-generation members will be conducted in each of these three latter places in order to explore the images and experiences of the ancestral home. Participant observation, field notes, internet discussions, and video, photographic and audio recordings will supplement the above data collection methods.

Potential applications and benefits

The research will be pioneering in that it will be:

- one of the first to address the counter-diasporic phenomenon of second-generation return;
- unique in its investigation of the 'migrant encounter' between the returning second generation and new immigrants;
- methodologically innovative in its combination of data collection techniques;
- engaging with the migrants studied by incorporating them as active participants in the research process, and discussing findings with them, as well as with academic audiences.

Our interdisciplinary pluri-method approach thus has an exemplary function – to demonstrate how to carry out certain kinds of research with migrants. And, beyond the Greek and Cyprus cases, it has potential applications in other areas of significant past emigration and current return, such as other Southern European countries, North Africa, the Caribbean etc.