Counter-diaspora: narratives of ‘return’ migration of second-generation Greek-Americans and Greek-Germans

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Outline of Seminar

• Context: counter-diaspora and the ‘return’ of the second generation; introducing the Greek Diaspora
• Research Questions: images of the ‘homeland’ in diaspora; why does the 2G ‘return’? And what are the outcomes?
• Research Design and Methods: ‘translocalities’ within the Greek diaspora; the life-narrative and its analysis
• Seven Narratives of Return: from idealism, pragmatism and ‘escape’ to disillusionment
• Conclusion: the value of studying 2G ‘return’
Funding and Key Outputs

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Key Publications:


Context 1: Counter-diaspora – a New Migration Chronotope?

• Studies of diaspora look rather rarely at actual return migrations (or return mobilities) to the ancestral homeland

• This is surprising given that most of the classic conceptualisations of diaspora (Safran 1991; Clifford 1994; Cohen 1997) define the phenomenon in relation to homeland, real or imagined, and a possible return thereto (Safran)

• Hence we see the value of a specific, detailed, empirical investigation into one example of counter-diasporic return – the ‘chronotope’ of 2G return from the Greek diaspora

• Alternative labels for counter-diasporic or 2G return: ‘ethnic return’ (Tsuda 2003, 2009 on Japanese-Brazilian nikkeijin), or ‘roots migration’ (Wessendorf 2007 on Swiss-Italian secondos)
Safran’s (1991) criteria for definition of a diasporic group

- Dispersal from a specific original centre to two or more distant, foreign locations
- Maintenance of a collective memory about a homeland (which may be imagined or even mythical)
- They believe they are not, and probably cannot, be fully accepted by, and integrated into, their host country and society
- They see their ancestral homeland as their ‘pure, authentic home’ and the place of eventual return – when conditions are right
- They are committed to the maintenance and restoration of their homeland to conditions of safety and prosperity
- The group’s consciousness and identity are defined by their ongoing relationship to their homeland
Context 2: The Second Generation and its Transnational Links

- Who are the second generation? Defining, problematising and loosening the term
- Most studies on the 2G focus on their ‘integration’ (Europe) or ‘assimilation’ (US) within the host society; major themes are educational and labour-market ‘performance’, as well as cultural, religious and linguistic identities
- Very little attention paid to the ‘transnational lives’ of the 2G: transnationalism almost wholly studied as a 1G phenomenon. Key exception is Levitt and Waters’ The Changing Face of Home: The Transnational Lives of the Second Generation (Russell Sage, 2002) which mainly focused, however, on short homeland visits, not on longer-term engagement with the homeland, such as more definitive return
- Distinction needs to be drawn between transnational links of the 2G as children and as adults.
Context 3: Return Migration

• Like migrant transnationalism, return migration almost entirely seen as a 1G phenomenon; 2G not seen as ‘true’ returnees (statistically they are not, but emically they are, in many cases)
• Many of the conventional frameworks for studying return migration – e.g. temporary vs. permanent; motives for return; issues of ‘home’ and ‘belonging’; experiences of (re-)integration; family and social networks etc – easily transfer to the study of 2G return
• But is ‘return migration’ the best way of looking at counter-diasporic movements? Perhaps we should think of return or counter-diasporic mobilities.
• And how to frame ongoing moves, for instance back to the country of birth (is this another ‘return’?). And how to frame ongoing links to the birth country (‘reverse transnationalism’?).
Context 4: Other Studies of Counter-Diaspora

- Robert Potter and Joan Phillips: 2G (and other) returns to the Caribbean (mainly Barbados) from Britain. A book (*The Experience of Return Migration: Caribbean Perspectives*, Ashgate, 2005) and many articles.
- Susanne Wessendorf: Swiss-Italian *secondos* returning to South Italian ‘hometowns’ (paper in *JEMS* 2007).
- Various other studies collected together in two journal special issues guest-edited by Russell King, Anastasia Christou and Peggy Levitt (*Mobilities 2011, Journal of Mediterranean Studies 2011*).
- Post-colonial returns (Dutch from Indonesia, *pieds noirs* from Algeria to France, Portuguese *returnados* from African colonies, British from India etc.).
- Post-socialist returns (eg. Estonians, Armenians, Hungarians, *Aussiedler* etc.).
Context 5: Introducing the Greek Diaspora

- Greek diaspora estimated at 5.5 million by Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs: 3m in US (however only 1.2m are 1G, 2G, 3G), 700,000 in Australia, 350,000 each in Canada and Germany
- We compare Greek migration to, and 2G return from, the US and Germany, two contrasting host-society contexts:
  - US has self-narrative of a nation build on immigration, assimilation and self-improvement – *ius soli* and *ius domicilii*
  - Germany has a traditionally exclusionary approach to immigrants – *ius sanguinis*
- Greek migration to US dates from 1890s; that to Germany heavily concentrated during 1961-73
- This means that generation structures are more complex in US, whereas in Germany there are strong cohort effects (see graph)
- In both destinations, there has been general evolution from factory employment to small business ownership (especially catering) for 1G.
Live Births to Greek Mothers in Germany
Research Questions

• How are images of the ‘homeland’ and a sense of Greekness constructed and passed on to the 2G in the diaspora?
• What factors stimulate the 2G’s desire to ‘return’?
• What are the family, gender and generation dynamics surrounding the 2G’s experience of living in diaspora and then in the homeland?
• What are the realities of the ‘return’ experience? Is it a ‘welcome embrace’ on the part of the homeland and its society, or is it a return of rupture and disillusionment?
Research Design and Field Methods

• Multi-sited ‘translocalities’ – focusing on multi-generation diaspora spaces in Berlin, New York, Athens and Thessaloniki
• Pilot phase 2007: Athens (to test research instruments and initiate contacts and interviews); Berlin and New York (to interview mainly 1G Greek immigrants and get an idea of diasporic life in US ‘Greektowns’ and Greek ‘ethnic colonies’ in German cities)
• Main fieldwork phase 2008: Athens, Thessaloniki, and surrounding areas
  – Quota-samples of life-narratives with 2G GG and GA
  – Informal focus/discussion groups
  – Participant observation in family gatherings, diaspora events etc.
• 2G quota-samples of ‘returnees’ with recorded life-narratives
  – 30 Greek-American (12M, 18F), mean age 44.7, median 43 years
  – 31 Greek-Germans (8M, 23F), mean age 32.3, median 30 years
• Plus 51 (25 Greek-Americans, 26 Greek-Germans) interviews with 1G (mainly) and 2G participants in Berlin and New York
The Life-Narrative

• The main objective of this research instrument is to access first-hand accounts of Greek diasporic life and counter-diasporic return

• Reflects the post-positivist, post-structuralist, ‘narrative turn’ in the social sciences, although it has roots in some of the classic documentary studies of the Chicago School. After falling out of favour for a while, personal narratives were revitalised in the 1970s and 1980s via oral history and feminist research methods

• What, exactly is the life-narrative? Here is one descriptive account:

  ...a storied, autobiographical account of a person’s life, or segment or aspect of it, told to another person. It is usually quite a full account, narrated over a period of one or several hours, often in more than one session. If it takes the form of an interview, it is the product of an interactive relationship, although the degree of ‘interference’ (eg. questioning vs. ‘vow of silence’) on the part of the researcher will vary, also according to the type of ‘narrative performance’ offered by the interviewee.
Analysing Life-Narratives: ‘Bathing in the Data’

• ‘Grand narratives’ vs ‘small’ narratives: to what extent do interviewees latch on to the grand narratives of Greek migration (sacrifice, hard work, success, ‘Greekness’ etc.) or of migration generally (neoliberalism, Marxist exploitation etc.) as opposed to constructing their own individualised stories? In exploring ‘inner narrative landscapes’ we look for:
  • Essentialised, externally scripted accounts vs. more self-reflective, autonomous, individualised accounts (and hybrids of the two)
  • Thematic coverage and thematic depth
  • Narrative style: continuous flow vs. stop and start, needing questions and prompts
  • Narrative capital (skilled at telling ‘their’ stories in a convincing way), and emplotment (build around a series of organising themes)
  • Issue of selectivity of narrators: portrayals vs. giving everyone a voice.
Backdrop: Growing up ‘Greek’ in the Diaspora

• Narratives recounted how Greek diasporic life is embodied in everyday practices (family life, language, food etc.) and articulated also through cultural institutions (the Greek School, Greek Orthodox Church etc.) and special events (weddings, Easter, name-days etc.)

• Many of these practices and events are highly gendered (both within the home and the public sphere – see Christou and King, JMS 2011)

• The concern has been to recreate ‘Greek (village) life’ in the diaspora; and on a wider scale to reiterate the ancestral Greek nation through shared practices and histories (and mythologies) transmitted from the 1G to the 2G and beyond

• In US cities, ‘Greektowns’ are long-established, but declined as residential concentrations due to suburbanisation of the Greek-American population after the 1970s. Most famous is Astoria, NY

• In German industrial cities, where nearly all Greeks settled, they created ethnic Greek ‘colonies’ replicating the kinship structures and traditions of the rural districts whence they came.
Preserving ‘Greekness’ in Diaspora: two illustrations

• Family discussion, New York. Speaker is Dora, 1G, the mother
  We still do insist on preserving our traditions – my husband was very
determined [on that]. Have you seen the movie ‘My [Big Fat] Greek
Wedding’? It was about our family! My kids saw it and laughed: they
saw their father and me. My daughter led the same life as that girl, my
daughter had to be home before dark [...] We have preserved our
customs, the language – even our grandchildren speak Greek – our
music, our festivities.

• Thomas, 2G GG, interviewed in Thessaloniki, born in Rottweil
  ...our parents would take us to church. Every time there was a struggle.
We were told to dress in our best clothes...We were brought up in the
Orthodox tradition [...] Most people in the neighbourhood where I
lived were Italian. In the next neighbourhood there were many
Spanish...and lots of Turks...These were our friends in Germany who
were practically our brothers.
Seven Narratives of ‘Return' 

1. Childhood return visits and stays 
2. Return as the dream of self-realisation 
3. Return and the ‘Greek way of life’ 
4. Family narrative of return 
5. Return as a life-stage event 
6. Return as escape from a difficult situation 
7. Narratives of disillusionment
1. Narratives of Childhood Visits and Stays

- Most 2G ‘returnees’ had strong, mostly fond, memories of regular holiday returns to Greece – generally annually from Germany, less often from US

- Main narrative themes are of fun, freedom, family warmth (grandparents, cousins...), heat and sunshine, nature, the seaside, food.

- For older children, however, other themes emerge in their mid-teen years – boredom at visiting lots of older relatives, long meals, maybe pressures to be ‘introduced’ to future marriage partners

- For several GG children, there were more fundamental and traumatic memories (not always negative) of being either ‘left behind’ or ‘sent back’ for lengthy childhood spells to be cared for by grandparents or other relatives, so both parents could work and earn in Germany.
‘Like a big playground’

We saved our money, every penny for the summer vacation. Summer vacation was the biggest holiday, and since my parents were economic migrants, they saved every penny so they could come back and see their homeland...if not every year, every other year...We would go to the village and spend time at the beach and lay in the water...as a child it was like a play time...you felt it as like a big playground here. So yeah, it felt like my big playground and my beach [...] Was I getting close to my roots? Of course, because I would see my grandparents and I’d see the way they lived...You begin seeing things more and looking at life in different ways.

Demetra (F34) 2G GA, interviewed Athens, ‘returned’ in 2001
‘Three days in a car, with all that stuff’

Every summer, six to eight weeks, by car; a traditional Greek-German vacation, by car, so you can carry all the things you want to carry. This is the nightmare of everybody, three days in a car, with all that stuff. I remember, like, in the beginning [laughs], it was like vacuum cleaners, and televisions – there was a time in Greece thinking that everything that has a German brand name is better...So you were carrying all that stuff back, and you were putting all the Greek stuff in the car and bringing it back to Germany. It’s like litres of olive oil, of wine and cheese and God knows what.

Rebecca (41), 2G GG, interviewed Athens
‘We took a bath with the chickens’

The memories I have from that house [in her mother’s village] is playing in the yard with the chickens, yeah because at the back of the house was a hen-coop...and you had to wait for the water to heat up on the wood-burning stove and pour it in to the tin buckets to take to the bath in the hen-coop [laughing] Yeah, we took a bath with the chickens! [...] I remember my grandmother, old lady just in black with long braids, she looked scary to me, missing teeth. I have images of her chasing a chicken around the yard and finally grabbing it, cutting its head off and that thing running around until it dropped...And I remember the taste of the food, it was so good; the chicken had a different smell, a different texture and taste...and the smell of bread baking in the wood-burning stove...I loved the food, the chicken, the tomatoes, the cheese, the fruit...

Magda (36), 2G GA, from San Francisco, interviewed in Athens.
2. Return as the Dream of Self-Realisation

• This is the closest equivalent to the notion of returning to one’s ancestral roots; that one can only feel ‘at home’ in the ‘homeland’; the return is a personal project of being, becoming and belonging; a project of identification and closure.

• It is a journey of self-discovery and self-fulfilment: the enactment of a dream in which the true self – the Greek self – can only be achieved and expressed by relocating to the ethnic homeland.

• Whilst this also overlaps with Narrative 3: The Greek Way of Life, it is also associated with essentialist interpretations of the ‘superiority’ of Greek culture and history, with frequent allusions to the ‘glory of Ancient Greece’ and Hellenism, monuments and landscapes.

• It tends to be a male narrative and associated with externally scripted ‘grand narratives’ about Greece and the Greeks.
‘Realising the dream’…’I am Greek’…’This is where I belong’

• Constantine (2G GA), Athens:
  ...so it was truly like a dream – an absolute dream come true.

• Pavlos (2G GG), Athens:
  I would say that deep inside me I feel Greek...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; yet...there isn’t anything more important than saying who you are. I am Greek and I like it...I consider that the Greek language is a language with no beginning and no 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 ... it’s more humane [compared to life in Germany]...people here still have families ... they grow up with 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...
But the dream can turn sour...

• Persephone (2G, GG), Athens:
  Because everyone dreams of a different tomorrow, right? When I first came to Greece I also dreamed that things would somehow be like I was on vacation, right? Laughter and partying and all that [...] But do you know what? I had hard times...Greece is not what you believed it to be. You have to fight.

• Evanthia (2G, GG), Thessaloniki:
  Basically I went to live in Greece because I had never lived there...I went to live the dream. I don’t want to say the dream turned into a nightmare – I just saw the negative side of Greece and I decided to return to Germany.

• Which leads to Narrative 7: Narratives of Disillusionment.
3. Return and the ‘Greek Way of Life’

- Here again we have an essentialistic, stereotypical and romanticised view of the attractions of the Greek way of life.
- Key themes are human warmth, family values, emotionality, informality, a relaxed outlook towards ‘rules’, a slower pace of life, better work-life balance, escaping the ‘rat-race’ etc.
- To some extent, this set of narrative themes and motivations links up with the literature on ‘lifestyle migration’ whereby people move for non-economic reasons to places where the ‘quality of life’ is better (such as international retirement migration)
- Often expressed in essentialistic styles of narrative based on ‘received wisdom’ within the Greek diaspora and the fleeting experiences of holidays in Greece, which do not represent the year-round experience of living and surviving in the ‘homeland’.
- So disillusionment often follows, linking again to Narrative 7.
‘The Greeks are more open, a warmer people’… ‘They know how to enjoy life’

• Rebecca (2G, GA), Athens:
  OK, in Greece the most outstanding thing for me is a kind of cultural life, the way of communication, it’s a more human way for me. They take life easier and are more emotional, I would say it’s the emotional part.

• Evanthia (2G, GG), Thessaloniki:
  The Greeks are more open, a warmer people; they are more communicative, accommodating, and helpful. In general it’s the way they behave towards their fellow human beings.

• Constantine (2G, GA), Athens:
  ...the things that attracted me to Greece were ... in the older generation there is a level of humility, of simplicity, of optimism [...] things that I love about people when I came here [for visits], like they know how to enjoy life, the family is still very important...they could balance the difference between work and personal life...
...A more cynical view

• Andreas (M60, 1G, GG) Berlin:
  Recently amongst the younger generation there is a tendency to idealise return and what Greece has to offer...[But] this is not based on a logical, realistic evaluation. I would say that it is limited more to the way of life...and less to realistic considerations like work relations, social relations...What these youngsters think is not the result of an intense experience with the Greek way of life, but their fifteen-day, three or four week summer vacations...Many of these young people who have tried living in Greece have ended up in Germany again.

• Constantine again:
  ...so little things like, you know, people smoking everywhere in hospitals or in elevators – three-person elevators! Like how can you even...and the guy is puffing away in the elevator. Those kind of things were odd but I could deal with them. It’s not a big deal...it’s not going to kill you...Like you drive the wrong way down a one-way street and a cop looks at you and just smiles...it’s not the end of the world, right?
4. The Family Narrative of Return

• Greek migration has generally been ‘return-oriented’, especially in Germany. Rates of return from the diaspora have varied over time, and by destination: lowest from North America and Australia, higher from Germany and Europe, where probably 50% of labour migrants have returned.

• Strong preservation of Greek ethnic community favours a ‘return-orientation’ although often the actual outcome is a ‘myth of return’.

• This ‘family narrative’ of return influences 2G children growing up in the diaspora, who thus ‘inherit’ this ‘return ideology’.

• In fact the children, having grown up surrounded by constant references to ‘going back’, and having been taken to Greece on frequent holiday visits, may be in a better position to ‘actualise’ return than their ‘ethnically encapsulated’ parents who have become elderly and out of touch with the fast-changing realities of the home country.

• The ‘family narrative’, almost by definition, is an externally scripted one and often expresses essentialised views of ‘Greekness’ and the ‘homeland’.
‘My parents have been intending to return permanently “next year” for decades!’

• Kyriaki (F25, 2G, GG), Thessaloniki:
  I feel very proud...of being Greek...I believe this notion that we must be proud of our country has been passed down to us by our parents. That is why I have returned...I owe this to my parents who are still in Germany but who wanted me to come and live here.

• Evanthia (F27, 2G, GG), Thessaloniki:
  My parents have been intending to return permanently to Greece ‘next year’ for decades [laughs], but this year never comes![...]Until recently, both of them worked, so there was this worry about what they would do if they returned to Greece...they were at an age when it wouldn’t be easy for them to find jobs in Greece. But it’s been two years now since my father retired, but my mother is not so keen to take this step, and I understand her completely.
5. Return as a Life-Stage Event

• Certain life-stages occur which are key ‘moments’ for return to take place, or be considered. These include:

• The transition from school/college/gymnasium to university. Especially from Germany, many 2Gs take the opportunity of the special quota of places at Greek universities reserved for ‘children of the diaspora’

• Marriage or meeting a life-partner, especially if the partner/spouse is a ‘Greek from Greece’, perhaps met on holiday or through family connections.

• (Early) retirement – this is more a feature of 2G Greek-Americans, some of whom are much older than 2G Greek-Germans.

• Some kind of ‘rupture’ event (divorce, redundancy etc.) which triggers a decision to make a ‘clean break’ by relocating to Greece – this shades into Narrative 6: Escape.
6. Return as ‘Escape’

- Especially amongst 2G women, ‘return’ to Greece can be seen as an escape-route and a way of achieving ‘freedom’.
- Usually, this had to do with a difficult, or even traumatic personal situation, often related to oppressive patriarchy, the ‘claustrophobia’ of the ethnic-Greek community in diaspora, an abusive or intolerable spousal situation, or issues of sexuality.
- For 2G GA or GG daughters, ‘leaving home’ and living independently in the host society might bring ‘shame’ on the family and be opposed; yet relocating to the homeland (the ‘fatherland’, the ‘mother country’) was seen as a more ‘legitimate’ move, especially if it was linked to higher education or professional status.
- Three contrasting examples:
‘My father was too strict with these things’

• Kyriaki (F25, 2G, GG), interviewed in Thessaloniki, spoke of the freedom she has now, and summed up her upbringing in Berlin as her ‘lost childhood’.

  I like life here very much; it’s not how I lived my life in Berlin...[My life] has changed...I can go out more easily now because my father was too strict with these things, he didn’t let us [my sisters and I] go out...Whereas here, Greek girls go out, even when they are 14. I believe I am much freer here, I can go out and I won’t be constantly looking at my watch thinking dad will be awake waiting for me...[We grew up] very religious, we all had to go to church on Sunday, and to Sunday school. We didn’t experience childhood: we finished [the German] school, we went to the Greek school in the afternoon, we came home, we studied, and we slept. This is why, when we came down to Greece in the summers, we went crazy!
‘If I had a gun I would kill you now’

- Rhea (F48, 2G, GG) was born in Germany but sent to Greece until the age of 7 when she was brought back to Germany and reunited with her parents whom she hardly knew. She was married at 20 to another Greek-German, but subsequently divorced and moved to Greece with her daughter.

  It was very difficult…I was not on good terms with my father. He was one of those people who have a mentality like men in Middle Eastern countries. No other person has needs or personal views; whatever he decides goes; he is the man of the house [...] It was an insult for them [parents] that I got divorced... ‘What will people say?’ ... A woman should endure everything and not get a divorce – that was their opinion [...] When I told my father I was going to get divorced he spat at me and said ‘If I had a gun I would kill you now’. From then on I knew I was on my own...I have not been on speaking terms with my father for many years now.
‘It’s difficult to be gay in Greektown’

- Manos (M64, 2G, GA, interviewed in Athens): his relocation to Greece at a mature age (50 and semi-retired) was an embodied and emotional journey of self-discovery and identification, an escape from the homophobic milieu of the classic ‘Greek’ area of New York, Astoria, as it was when he was growing up there in the 1950s and 1960s.

  Growing up I was made very aware of my Greekness...There was always a conflict within me between my Greekness and being an American... [especially] in my teens...after the realisation of my sexuality...From that point on I knew I had to get away from Astoria, my family and by association all things Greek. But being Greek, that is almost impossible ... The weird thing is I returned to live here [in Greece].

  When people ask me why [ I chose to come back], the only answer I can give is that it was a mid-life crisis. I am a gay man and ... a lot of my friends had died of AIDS. My mother too died around that time, and the company I had been working for had been absorbed... I could see the writing on the wall.
7. Narratives of Disillusionment

• These are not so much about motivations to ‘return’ but the consequential outcomes: these are narratives of the ‘post-return experience’ and explore a large number of narrative themes, of which those below are the most common:

• Chaos of everyday life, especially in Athens – traffic, pollution, disregard for other people etc. – always contrasted with the ‘efficiency’, ‘order’, and civility of life in the US or Germany.

• Corruption, at all levels of society, but especially, in their experience, in the employment field.

• Xenophobia of Greek society, again contrasted with how immigrants are viewed in the US and Germany.

• Negative attitudes towards themselves, as diasporic or ‘hybrid’ Greeks, and therefore not ‘true’ Greeks.
‘Greeks are so rude’

- Vassiliki (2G, GA), born and raised in California, listed some of her disappointments of life in Athens:
  
  Greeks are so rude...Two things that really bother me are the treatment of animals...dog shit all over the place and then people still abandon their pets...And the other thing is driving...I get road rage everyday from the Greeks... ‘I am better than you, I don’t need to wait for this signal, I will just go ahead of all of you’... This is my biggest complaint.

- And Lucy (2G, GA) Athens:
  
  Things in the US are very simple; they’re fast, they’re quick, you get it done. You run your errands every day, you run to the bank, there is no queue or lines, people aren’t shoving or pushing in front of you. Here it is completely different. Here you spend half the day trying to find parking so you can go to the supermarket, find parking to go to the bank, wait for an hour to be served, people are cutting in front of you, people are being rude to you...
‘Everyone tries to live on the sly’

• Zoe (F28, 2G, GG), Thessaloniki:
  What is tiring for me is that here 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 grew up there and consider Hamburg my home-town much more than here...So when I go to Germany it’s as if I go home.

• Eugenia (2G, GA), Athens:
  Is there corruption? Yes. Is there nepotism? Yes. Here in Greece it’s completely disorganised. And I think that if Greeks want to fight corruption they have to start from the top...The Greek system and mentality is such that it breeds corruption...
‘There’s too much racism here’

- Greek society, hamstrung by the grand narrative of Greek ethno-nationalism and a *ius sanguinis* ideology, has had extreme difficulty in coming to terms with the rather sudden influx of more than 1 million immigrants since 1990, and 2G returnees are struck by the widespread xenophobia and racism. Two examples from many:

- Fani (2G, GG): We don’t have the racist element that the Greeks have...In Germany because we were foreigners it was natural for us to accept them and them to accept us...I believe there is too much racism [here in Greece]... I mean I don’t care if foreigners are from Albania, Africa, whatever... the racism here is too much

- Eugenia (2G, GA): This morning on TV news, they were talking about a Polish man who was on a bus and was drunk and being aggressive... And he [the news presenter] was going on and on...I mean hey, what kind of news is this? Big deal! I mean the world is suffering in so many ways, and we really don’t need to have five minutes worth of a Polish man who was drunk on a Greek bus, poor guy. If he was Greek, would they have spent so much time discussing it? No. There is a phobia in Greece [about immigrants], it’s obvious
‘The Greeks see you differently’

- Natalia (F36, 2G, GG) complained about references to ‘village Germans’, used by Greeks to refer to postwar emigrants’ rural origins and traditional mentality which stayed with them in diaspora and is assumed to have been passed on to the next generation:

  …they have given us the name ‘village-Germans’ …During my 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. All my friends are of Greek descent from Germany. OK, I have a few authentic Greek friends, but they are not my close friends. They [the Greeks] see you differently; you strike Greeks as different from them.

- Constantine (M30, 2G, GA) internalised his failure to fit in largely as a result of his never having lived in Greece before. He was contemplating ‘return’ to the US:

  I really wanted to get into the [Greek] culture. I speak the language well enough... I can really blend in, you know, turn native... But actually, I can’t. I’ve realised that I’ve never lived here... I never went to school here... I never had friends here... It’s left me as an outsider, a foreigner in my homeland. So put all these things together, this is the reason I won’t be staying.
Conclusions

• 2G ‘return’ is a migration chronotope which has largely been overlooked in the migration literature. It might be regarded as counter-intuitive – why would young adults want to move to a country they have never lived in, from which their parents left out of poverty and unemployment?

• Yet evidence – admittedly anecdotal rather than statistical – indicates that it is a growing migration flow, which occurs in the wake of postwar mass migration, globalisation and inter-generational social mobility.

• How is it to be conceptualised within diaspora studies? As the quintessential concluding phase of diaspora (the diaspora returns home and dissolves itself); or merely as a phase of ongoing movement within the diaspora which mobilises itself through successive phases of rediasporisation, ambivalent ‘returns’ and reverse transnationalism?

• From the point of view of migrant-focused studies of ‘home’, ‘identity’ and ‘belonging’, the movements and identifications of the 2G are particularly interesting because of the ‘reverseness’ of their migratory trajectory. Their identifications seem to oscillate between the return ‘home’ as a search for ontological security in a world of fast-paced change and globalisation (an essentialist, teleological interpretation); and on the other hand a post-modern experience of hyphenated or multiple identities in which the very notion of home is malleable and constantly evolving (a self-scripted, individualist narratological interpretation)