'We took a bath with the chickens': memories of childhood visits to the homeland by second-generation Greek and Greek Cypriot 'returnees'

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Abstract *Drawing on a wider study of 90 second-generation Greeks and Greek Cypriots who have relocated to their ancestral homeland, in this article we focus on the significance of childhood visits to the homeland. Freedom – how children were allowed to roam free and stay up late – is the key trope of such memories, in contrast with the strict spatio-temporal parenting they received in the host country. Different, sometimes less pleasant memories, however, emerge when the visits took place during later, teenage years. We explore the connections between childhood visits and adult relocation. Adult returnees find that settlement in the homeland produces a new set of challenges and reactions that differ markedly from childhood experiences and memories. They engage a second narrative trope, nostalgia, reflecting on the loss of the 'authentic' nature of the homeland and its customs and values. Instead, they highlight the materialism and xenophobia of Greek and Cypriot society nowadays. However, they see the 'homeland' as a safer place in which to raise their own children.*

Keywords SECOND GENERATION, RETURN MIGRATION, CHILDHOOD, MEMORY, TRANSNATIONALISM, GREECE, CYPRUS

Relatively little has been written about the transnational links of the second generation with their parents' country of origin, and even less on their experiences of childhood visits to the parental 'homeland'. In this article we aim to explore these childhood transnational visits, taking as our empirical frame a comparative study of three second-generation groups – US-born Greeks, German-born Greeks and British-born Greek Cypriots – now living in the 'homeland', Greece or Cyprus, where most of them have moved as young adults. We explore their memories of childhood visits to their respective 'homelands', including the role these visits had on their later-life decisions to relocate to Greece or Cyprus in the longer term.

The extensive literature that now exists on return migration and transnationalism for the most part is resolutely focused on the first generation (King and Christou 2008: 9–12). For return migration this might be semantically justified because the second generation does not 'return' to a place from which it never came (in terms of birthplace statistics). On the other hand, the *affective* connection to what is often regarded as the 'home country' may be very strong, so that the 'return' has ontological meaning even if it contravenes the logic of migration statistics.

For transnationalism, the explanatory excuse might be that the migration is so recent that the second generation does not yet exist, or that migrants who have children have left them behind in the care of spouses or other family members, sustained by migrant remittances. While these demographic arrangements of transnational migration are undoubtedly widespread, it is evident from the postwar immigration histories of western Europe and North America that migrations of family settlement have occurred on a very large scale, with substantial host-country-born second (and now third) generations. It is also true that these second generationers *are* being intensively studied, but this research focus is normatively guided by their progress along the path of integration or assimilation into the host society.

Scholars are now beginning to challenge this last statement. Several chapters in Levitt and Waters's (2002) edited book on the transnational lives of the second generation in the USA describe visits to various 'homelands' by older teenagers and young adults (but not by younger children). In their 'ethnographies of the new second generation' in New York, Kasinitz et al. (2004: 6) acknowledge that 'in every group we talked to [Caribbeans, Chinese, Latinos and Russian Jews] there are at least some second-generation people who are strongly tied to their parents' homelands. They visit annually, send money, and even contemplate settling there.' Other significant studies on second-generation transnationalism include Robert Smith's (2006) acclaimed ethnography of 'Mexican New York', Tsuda's (2003) equally original multi-sited ethnography of Japanese Brazilian *nikkeijin*, and a raft of recent papers on second-generation returnees to Barbados by Phillips and Potter (2005, 2009) and Potter and Phillips (2006a, 2006b, 2008). Also worth noting are two recently edited collections, one on 'ethnic return migration' where generational specificity is often blurred or ignored (Tsuda 2009), and the other on the return of the 'next generations' (Conway and Potter 2009), which includes case studies of both second-generation and other 'youthful' returns. Susanne Wessendorf's research on '*secondos*', second-generation Swiss Italians and their links to their southern Italian towns and villages of parental origin (see especially Wessendorf 2007, 2009), is geographically closer to our work. So too are studies of the Greek 'overseas' diaspora in North America and Australia that touch directly or indirectly on second-generation transnational links and 'return' moves (Panagakos 2003, 2004; Tsolidis 2009).

Peggy Levitt's (2009) latest contribution to this debate reasserts a focus on homeland influences and includes references to Boston-based young persons' homeland visits to India, Pakistan, Brazil and Ireland. Her conclusion, namely that the second generation is situated among competing generational, ideological and moral reference paths, including those of their parents, grandparents, as well as their own

real and imagined perspectives on their multiple homelands, helped to inspire our study. Our core methodology has been the collection of life narratives from second-generation Greek Americans, Greek Germans and Greek Cypriots who had relocated to their parental home countries.

We see the homeland visit as a performative act of belonging and (potentially) of researching and discovering one's roots (cf. Fortier 2000: 3–5). The 'roots' metaphor has powerful resonance in studies of diaspora and of tourism directed to real or imagined homelands (Wessendorf 2007). For Basu (2005), who did fieldwork in the Scottish highlands and islands, 'roots return' is both actual physical mobility – expressed through visits to ancestral and heritage locations – and a more collective general project of (re)connection to the homeland. For Baldassar (2001), studying Italo-Australians visiting their ancestral villages, these long-distance returns have the character of a secular pilgrimage. For childhood visits, individual agency will vary according to the age of the child and whether their parents 'took' them or they travelled independently as older individuals, such as college students.

This article, then, is about childhood, memory, multiple notions of home and eventual relocation to the ancestral homeland. While all these aspects are potentially interconnected, none is straightforward or simple. With childhood, the age boundary is blurred and we hear different interpretations of homeland visits in the narratives as the child matures into adolescence and adulthood. We use this biographical timeline to structure the article, which – following a section on methodology – is in three parts. In the first, we explore the key themes that emerged from narrative memories of childhood visits. These are keen anticipation, fun, freedom, human and climatic warmth, nostalgia and, for older children, boredom and family pressure. In the second part, we link childhood visits to return migration as adults. In the final section, the participants reflect on their relocation and draw contrasts between their childhood experiences and their lives now.

Methods

Our key research instrument is the life narrative, collected from quota samples of three returnee groups (30 in each). Most interviews were carried out during 2008, but fieldwork also comprised pilot studies in 2007 and follow-up contact with many participants in 2009.[1] Roughly equal numbers of men and women were interviewed. There are no official figures on second-generation returnees in Greece and Cyprus, for they are a hidden group in censuses and population statistics. Our *a priori* belief that working-age returnees would be mainly concentrated in urban areas, for employment and social reasons, led us to focus our fieldwork in four main urban centres – Athens and Thessaloniki in Greece, and Nicosia and Limassol in Cyprus – but we also interviewed some respondents in smaller towns and villages.

Given that this is an 'unknown' population, the choice of participants could not be a random sample. The researchers' personal networks offered one entry into the recruitment process, but we resisted the temptation of easy snowballing and aimed to ensure a diversity of participants by careful use of intermediaries and other contact

strategies (Christou 2009). That so many participants spoke about childhood visits in the same way and with the same themes emerging encourages confidence in our findings and compensates, to some extent, for the lack of a rigorous sample frame.

While we recorded a few narratives at the first meeting, most occurred after a preliminary meeting had taken place to brief the participant and deal with ethical issues. In most cases, we also arranged follow-up meetings to clarify and discuss findings. Typically, each 'narrative performance' lasted for one to two hours, but there were quite wide variations, especially where we recorded two or more sessions with the same participant.[2]

The narratives were participant driven: minimal interrogation and something approaching a 'vow of silence' were our operational guidelines. This does not mean that the interviews were unstructured. Given the life histories of the participants as second-generation Greek or Greek Cypriot 'returnees', and the pre-announced theme of the research, most participants' 'narrative maps' were built around mobility, as well as around issues of identity and belonging, which are always acute among diasporic people (Chamberlain and Leydesdorff 2004: 233).

Our narrative-based approach draws both on an established tradition of oral history research in migration (Thompson 1978; Thomson 1999) and on recent arguments that we now live in an age of 'small' or individual (as opposed to 'grand') narratives (Goodson 2006). Narrative theorists such as Mishler (1991) see narratives as a central device of self-identification and of how we give meaning to our lives. The social and spatial contexts in which narratives are set are, however, equally important. The bridge between personal biography and cultural history connects the internal world to the external world. Life narratives work their way outward through a series of onion-like circles – self, family, others, community and the whole society (Plummer 2001: 243).

As Chamberlain and Leydesdorff (2004: 228) point out, while migrants' memories are not part of the standard scientific toolkit for studying mobility, they remain a uniquely insightful way of accessing migrant experience, sensitivities and identities. The inevitable question arises: if verbalizing memories is an act of representation (and of performance in the interview setting), then what is the relationship to fact? Are such retrospective narratives 'real' and 'authentic' reconstructions of self, home and the past? But are these the right questions to ask? Memories are often more than mere repositories of fact: they are an act of remembering that can create new meanings and understandings, both of past and present; they can ignite our imaginations and enable us vividly to recreate our reflections of home as a haven filled with nostalgia, longing and desire (Agnew 2005: 10). Let us see how this powerful statement resonates with our second-generation returnee participants, whose feelings of home are likely to be unusually fluid and ambivalent.

Key themes in memories of childhood visits

First, we need to make an important point about the timing of the three emigration streams that underpin the second generation. Greek Cypriot migration to Britain

was largely a phenomenon of the 1950s and 1960s. Greek migration to (West) Germany was roughly contemporaneous, except that it started a bit later: its heyday was the 1960s and early 1970s. Greek migration to the United States has a much longer history, starting more than a hundred years ago and continuing, with interruptions during the two world wars and the Great Depression, until the 1960s. These different historical phasings have implications for the appearance of generational cohorts. For Greek Cypriots and Greek Germans, second-generation returnees tend to be aged between their late twenties and early forties and to have returned within the last 20 years. Greek-Americans, on the other hand, embrace a wider age range, including some who returned several decades ago and who are now quite elderly, as well as young returnees who are the progeny of Greek migrants to the USA in the 1960s. The age of the interviewee is important as this will closely govern the historical time (the 1960s, 1970s or 1980s) at which childhood occurred, and therefore the stage of 'development' that Greece and Cyprus were in when childhood visits took place.

'Every summer we would go to Greece': on frequency of visits, and the journey

Given distance and cost, returns were more frequent and regular from Britain and Germany than they were from the United States. Most Greek Cypriot and Greek German respondents remember returning every year, for the summer break of a month or so. For some it was twice a year, adding a second trip at Easter or Christmas. Here are some typical brief quotes.[3]

> Every summer we would go to Greece, every summer, for about a month.
> (Thomas, 29, Greek German)

> As we were growing up, every summer, every summer, my father would bring us over to Cyprus.　　　　　(Alexandra, 37, Greek Cypriot)

> My father used to bring us on holiday twice a year to Cyprus to keep the Cypriot culture.　　　　　(Angela, 41, Greek Cypriot)

Note the patriarchy evident in two of these quotes ('father would bring us to Cyprus') – a theme to which we shall return later.

For most Greek Americans, returns were less regular, above all because of the extra cost:

> We would come to Greece like every two or three years in summer. … They [parents] would really save up – it was a big thing and they geared everything towards, like they wouldn't buy us designer clothes and things like that because they were saving for a trip to Greece.
> (Anna, 34, Greek American)

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For the USA and the UK, at least since the 1970s, returns were by air, which meant that for older interviewees, regular childhood returns would have been unlikely. Mike (57, Greek Cypriot) remarked that, when he was a child in London, family holidays were to Brighton and Hastings, not to Cyprus. Return visits from Germany, on the other hand, were usually overland, by car – which brought its own challenges. The following quote is a nice evocation of the performativity of the annual trip down to Greece, as well as of its materiality – the 'exchange' of high-quality German-manufactured consumer goods with the Greek products of the soil:

> Every summer vacation, six to eight weeks, by car. Actually, it's 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, that you cannot put on a plane.
>
> (Rebecca, 41, Greek German)

'Like a big playground': of sun, fun, beaches and freedom

Childhood memories of visits were almost always very positive, especially during the pre-teen years. There was the obvious feeling of being on holiday (but on a rather different type of holiday than for children from a non-migrant background), with frequent references to sun, sea, beaches, idyllic villages, nature and the countryside, and a warm welcome from family members (cf. also Wessendorf 2007: 1087 on Swiss-Italian children's holiday returns). One word stood out in the narratives of all these summer holiday visits – *freedom*. Children saw themselves as allowed much more freedom to run about without supervision, to stay out late, and to do things that were forbidden in their 'host' countries. This was especially noticeable in the Greek-Cypriot narratives, which suggests that the contrast between the 'safeness' of Cyprus and the 'mean streets' of London (or other big cities) was sharper than between Greece on the one hand and Germany and the USA on the other. The contrast between freedom in Cyprus (and Greece) and restrictions in the host country was most striking for the female interviewees, reflecting the powerful gender dynamic of Greek and Cypriot family life.

Where, exactly, did the childhood visits take place? The narratives reveal quite a complex geography of types of place. Some parents (first-generation migrants) had bought flats or houses by the sea, so holidays were divided between the coast and staying with relatives inland. Both in Cyprus and Greece, most emigrants leaving in the 1950s and 1960s came from villages and small towns, as both countries had mainly rural, agricultural economies at that time. Other emigrants came from the

Greek islands. Hence, the holiday returns could be to any of these kinds of location. That is not the full story, however, because while emigration was taking place other family members (especially the emigrants' brothers and sisters) were migrating internally, to Athens, Thessaloniki or Nicosia. These places might also therefore feature on the return-visit itineraries, except that in the summer peak these cities empty out as people go back to their villages or decamp to the coast. Either way, beaches and the seaside, and villages and the countryside, are the two most frequently mentioned *topoi* – inevitably in idyllic terms.

> We would come to Athens for maybe a week, maximum two weeks and stay with my aunt, and then we would go to the village and spend time by the beach and, you know, play in the water … as a child it was like a play time … it felt like my big playground.
>
> > (Demetra, 34, Greek American)

> When I was very small [and visiting Cyprus] I used to go to the shops in [names village] and ask for things and walk down there, be a Cypriot. And my father, he was someone of, not importance, but someone of recognition in the village, and they always knew who I was and said hello to me, so I felt a big part of all that was going on. My father would invite all his friends back to the house and we'd have big barbeques and meet all his family, his friends, and really have a nice [time] and the music, a lot of music everywhere, yeah, and I enjoyed it. … I learnt more about my parents on holiday than I ever did living with them 11 months of the year in the UK!
>
> > (Maya, 42, Greek Cypriot)

This friendliness and sense of community, especially in the villages, links closely to the main trope of the childhood narratives, freedom. From dozens of examples, here are two descriptions taken from British Cypriots, whose interview material is particularly rich on this theme. Note how often the holiday visit to Cyprus is associated with a significant childhood or adolescent event, like learning to ride a bike or going out to a disco for the first time. And note how relationships with Cyprus-based cousins are so important, both in accessing 'freedom' and acting as 'protectors'; in other words, 'it's all right as long as you are with your cousins.' The first extract is from Theodora (28) and is in two parts: first, she describes her upbringing in London; then she switches to holidays in Cyprus.

> Growing up in London was … when you're like me, my generation – like you said, second-generation, our parents, because they were fresh from Cyprus and they came to a strange land, they stuck with their communities a lot. We lived in Palmers Green, which was a very Greek area. I was brought up quite strictly, because I was a girl. My brother could go out, he could play, do whatever he wanted but I had to stay at home. I had to be escorted by my brother while I was going out, stuff like that. … My parents brought me up, or

tried to bring me up, within our culture. I had it embedded in me that I was Greek, that I was Greek Cypriot. … I had friends in school, but I wouldn't go round to their houses. I really socialized more with my cousins than I did with my friends. And, if I had a friend from school they'd have to be approved by my parents … my mother'd have to meet the parents. … She was just so worried. … She'd always say to me, you know, 'not that I don't trust you, it's just that I don't trust everybody else.' … I was driven to school, to my embarrassment, up to the age of 15 [laughs out loud] in a battered Mazda, oh it was really embarrassing. … Whereas my brother could go on his own … and I, er, was encouraged to do chores around the house, whereas my brother didn't have to do it 'cause he's a boy and I'm a girl, and I'm supposed to know how to do it, 'cause I'm gonna be a housewife, and all that kind of rubbish … and that's it. … Oh yeah, slumber parties, I wasn't allowed to do that, 'cause I wasn't allowed to stay at somebody else's house overnight, my mum didn't trust like an English family or whatever.

…

And the funny thing was that when I was on holiday here in '95, you know 15, mid-teens or whatever, the first time I went out was actually in Cyprus. … My cousins here – this is when I found out 'wow, we really are so different' – so we were like 'yeah, we're going out', and for some reason, as strict as my mum was in England, she would let me do whatever I wanted in Cyprus, it was so bizarre. … And, you know, *she was different* … in England if I wanted to go down to the shop I wasn't allowed, but here I could just roam around and do whatever I wanted … so I kinda enjoyed the freedom of the holidays. And my cousin was going to take me out, and my mum was like 'all right as long as your cousin looks after you'; even though she was three months younger than me [laughs] she was looking after me, 'cause I was from England and I didn't know my way around [laughs]. And that was the first time I went clubbing. It was in the tourist district [of Limassol], it was really funny. I just wore something normal, you know, not super-trendy, just something to go out in. And my cousins were with their mini-skirts and they had a full face of make-up on, they had their highlights, and I was like [mimics shocked expression] and I felt like a baby actually, I really felt like a child, even though I was 15.

Among many significant interpretive remarks that could be drawn out of this long interview extract, we highlight the gendered upbringing of sons and daughters within the Cypriot community in Britain, the multiple social roles of cousins in both London and Cyprus, and the 'confrontation' between models of youth behaviour and 'growing up' in the two places. This ambiguous 'reverse' encounter between the 'traditional' and the 'modern' was raised by other interviewees too, both in the context of childhood visits and in relation to their current lives in Cyprus (and Greece). The most common explanation was the 'inversion', through migration and its temporal and

generational effects, of the 'expected' relationship between the 'traditional' (Cyprus as a poor emigration country and colony of Britain) and the 'modern' (Britain as wealthy, modern and cosmopolitan), but even this interpretation has its twists and nuances. Theodora again says:

> So there was a difference … and whilst I was brought up strictly and thought that everyone else was like that, the reality was … the Cypriots here looked down on us, because they saw us as villagers. … I always enjoyed seeing my cousins over here and stuff, even though I got teased as well – they used to take the piss out of my Greek [laughs]. They saw us as villagers 'cause we went, or people left after the war or whatever, and they kept their traditions as tightly as possible. And most of them were village traditions, because they were brought over from the village, whereas they [the Cypriots in Cyprus] had become Europeans, they'd become modern, and progressed, and they see us as being backwards a bit, which I actually find hilarious, 'cause it's the other way round. The thing is that actually we are more open-minded, more worldly, than they are. … You know, I'm 28 now and I've moved over here and have a career [she works in property development], and I know people my age that are still getting money from their parents…

Once again, this raises many interesting issues to which we shall return later in the article. For now, let us hear one more 'narrative of freedom'. Although female interviewees like Theodora related the most striking accounts, young males experienced similar contrasts:

> Oh yeah, I remember coming over, my first holiday I remember, I was six. Cyprus was very different back then. I remember the beach, I remember staying in the village; we had a house in the village. I remember staying in the flat here in Limassol. … I remember my cousins, playing with my cousins. I remember the food of course. Cyprus was brilliant because you got to play without any restrictions. … You didn't have to be home by a certain time, my parents felt safe leaving me out with my cousins, they'd never have to ask where we were. I remember I learnt to ride a bicycle in Cyprus and as soon as I learnt, I was out everywhere, whereas in England I wouldn't have dreamt of getting a bicycle. I remember I wasn't allowed to play anywhere apart from our garden in England, whereas in Cyprus as long as there's someone that they knew with me I could be anywhere. … I felt a lot freer as a child in Cyprus.
>
> (Harris, 29, Greek Cypriot)

'They were gonna marry me off here': teenage and later experiences

Some, however, during their later teenage years, had more mixed views of Cyprus. Particularly in the villages and away from the towns and beach-life, Cyprus seemed a

duller place with not much to do. In other cases, interviewees realized that the trips were a chance for family members to introduce them to a potential marriage partner, which they generally did not appreciate. 'I didn't want to come here when I was older … because there was pressure from my father's family that they were gonna marry me off here' (Tania, 48, Greek Cypriot).

For Greece, the picture is somewhat different. On the one hand, there seems to be more continuity of pleasant feelings through the various phases of childhood; and, on the other hand, we find more young people, particularly in their college and university years, visiting Greece independently, so the encounter with the homeland may be less family-oriented. Nevertheless, for many, visiting relatives in villages could be boring:

> We got here as fast as we could and my dad would get us out in the countryside. We spent most of the time just visiting family and you know having huge feasts … like these long visits to people and their friends … the relatives … you know often boring visits where we had to wait and wait until they finished talking and stuff and really dull.
>
> (Anna, 34, Greek American)

> And because my mom has so many sisters we met every summer and spent our time between [names a series of places where various sisters lived]. We spent a lot of time near Plagiari because it was closer to the beach and there was more room to stay. Easter-time we'd skewer lambs in the yard, summertime we'd have lunch all together after the beach, oh, it was just great, wonderful. In Athens I have [names another aunt and cousins] … and I'd spend half my time there … we went to the beach … and every evening we'd go out, you know, when we were younger just for a coffee, juice or a walk, and then as we got older for a beer or clubbing, this and that. I stopped going to Agrinio [her mother's rural village] in high school because it was boring. Can I talk about my memories [of Agrinio]?
>
> (Magda, 36, Greek American)

'We took a bath with the chickens': on tradition, backwardness, authenticity and nostalgia

The question at the very end of the last extract leads into the next key theme from the childhood narratives, reconstructing what was seen as a traditional and now disappeared (or fast disappearing) way of life. Magda's retrospective continues:

> My favourite memories of Agrinio are, I guess, culture shock, coming from San Francisco to a house that had no inner plumbing. … There was a hole in the ground, with spiders and cockroaches, ants, big ants, I've never seen ants so big, moths at night, mosquitoes, all kinds of creepy-crawly things, and you had to squat there. It was awful – every time I went in there, there was the stench and the bugs. That was a bad experience but looking back I think it did

me good. I don't know how, but I like it that I have the memory of that. … The good memories I have from that house is playing in the yard with the chickens, yeah because the back of the house was a hencoop and I didn't mind waiting for the water to heat up on the wood-burning stove and to pour it into the tin buckets to take to the bath in the hencoop [laughing]. We took a bath with the chickens! … I remember my grandmother, old lady just in black with long braids, and I was always kind of afraid of her. She looked scary to me; missing teeth. I have images of her chasing a chicken round the yard and finally grabbing it, cutting its head off and that thing running around headless until it dropped. I had been looking from the window, I was so … mesmerized, shocked. And I would tell these stories to my friends back in San Francisco and they thought I was lying. … I remember the taste of the food; it was so good; the chicken had a different texture and a different smell and some flavour, and the bread, there is no bread like that … the smell of bread baking and the wood-burning stove … anything that was cooking just tasted so good. I was always a stick because I never ate in San Francisco but when I was in Greece, I always ate and put on a few pounds. I loved the food, the chicken, the tomatoes, the cheese, the fruit; I remember eating pizzas and ham … and just getting soaking wet from the juice of the pizza.

Sights, sounds, smells and tastes all emanate powerfully from this evocative account tinged with nostalgia on the one hand and more than a hint of scariness on the other – the toothless grandmother, the headless chicken and the foul-smelling toilet. The quote resonates closely with Agnew's (2005: 10) remark about migrant memories being 'surrounded by an emotional aura that makes them memorable'. Such reminiscences repeatedly emerged from the accounts of early visits, especially those of the older participants whose childhood visits were in the 1960s and 1970s. They remember the villages, especially, as sites of consumption, gifts, hospitality, plentiful food and family warmth. Here, 'our Greek (or Cypriot) cousins' figure prominently both because among families of this era they were generally so numerous and because they were the obvious contemporaries with whom to play and 'hang out'.

Loads [of family], yeah, they're like cockroaches. My mother is one of nine children, so there's lots of aunts and uncles and cousins, extended family, great aunts, and even neighbours that we'd call uncle and aunt. … Everybody made such a fuss of you, all aunts and uncles, pushing money into your hands, that was always a good thing! [laughs] and eating everywhere you went. In Cyprus you get that sense of welcome, of hospitality. … You must sit down; you must eat.

(Marcus, 35, Greek Cypriot)

Some expressed nostalgia for a rural way of life that has all but disappeared:

…when we first came here in the 1970s, like Greece was so different. … We would go to the village … we'd ride donkeys and … it's not like that any

more. … When you come to Greece [nowadays] you've still got beautiful places, but in the 1970s, for instance there was almost no trash back then. People didn't use packaging, like they would reuse it, like the cans that they put flowers in … it was a different context to the States where we had grown up [where] there were all these consumer things and the packaging and trash.

<div align="right">(Anna, 34, Greek American)</div>

The sensual experiences of these childhood and earlier-life visits particularly struck others – the landscape, the smells, heat and so forth. As Mike put it: 'Every time I got off the plane and that heat hit you in the face, and the smell of Cyprus, the dust, it was strange, very strange, I can't describe, you know, it felt like I'd been away and come home, instead of the other way round' (Mike, 57, Greek Cypriot). We shall pick up these themes of nostalgia for the 'authentic' Greece and Cyprus in the final part of the article. For now, we look at the links between memories of childhood visits and the subsequent, often much later, decision to relocate to the parental homeland.

Linking childhood visits with adult relocation

With respect to the Caribbean, Duval (2004) has addressed the relationship between the return visit and return migration, though in the context of first-generation return. He argues that 'migrants use such trips both to retain ties to their former homeland and to aid in their social reintegration upon permanent return.' They see the return visit as a 'conduit' through which to maintain 'social visibility' in their 'external' homeland, as well as a 'transnational exercise, bridging identities' between the two poles of the migration (Duval 2004: 51, 54, 62). Two things, however, differentiate our study from Duval's and make our research questions inherently more complex. First, since we are dealing with the second generation, notions of 'home', 'homeland' and 'return' are more fluid and harder to pin down. Second, the connections we are trying to make are between childhood visits (it was adult visits in Duval's case) and return, which takes a lot of the direct agency away from the explicit decision-making link. In fact, Duval (2004: 52) notes that the return visit, at whatever age it takes place, may not be explicitly causal, but that it only has an indirect influence on the decision to return on a long-term basis.

Our narrative evidence fails to give a consistent answer to this question. Sometimes a direct causal connection is made, but in other cases different factors are at play, such as how an individual's return is embedded in wider family dynamics of migration and return, marriage, relationships (or their break-up), or just serendipity. Sometimes a sense of 'home in the homeland' (Christou 2006) is derived less from regular childhood visits than from a 'diaspora' nurtured sense of ethnic identity. Mike's remark at the end of the last quote reveals that, for him, Cyprus has always been home, despite being brought up in London and not making visits to Cyprus in his early childhood (in an earlier quote he said he was taken on holiday to English seaside towns). Mike maintained that he always felt Cypriot and always knew that one day he would live in Cyprus, though this did not happen until he was 53:

[Growing up in London] I felt Cypriot in every way, although to listen to me now I'm very English. … I knew one day I would come to live in Cyprus, it's something that's always been inside, I don't know how or when but I knew. … I knew I would eventually settle here.

(Mike, 57, Greek Cypriot)

Other narratives echo Mike's essentialized view of himself as incontrovertibly Cypriot and of Cyprus as his natural home. Each, however, reflects different circumstances, as one would expect. Again, in different ways, each reflects the link between childhood upbringing (including homeland visits) and subsequent 'return'. Thomas's parents encouraged him to attend the Greek high school in Germany, which preserved his 'Greekness' (especially his competence in the language) and, combined with regular summer visits, shaped his later decision to move to Greece to attend university and develop a career:

I had just finished the third year in high school and I had to choose whether or not to continue with the Greek high school on a regular basis without attending the German one any longer. I had just had a very nice summer in Greece. My mother would tell me constantly to continue with the Greek school, for us to return to Greece, you know the usual things we are told. … And she got her way, she managed to convince me … I simply wanted to return to my homeland. Every summer we would go to Greece and during the summer Greece is always very beautiful with a lot of sun and sea; we were nostalgic for this when in Germany. I can say that this was the basic reason.

(Thomas, 29, Greek German)

What we see here is a kind of 'family narrative of return' – led in Thomas's case by his mother – which, together with the idyllic summer visits, nurtured Thomas's desire to 'return' to Greece, which he did at the age of 19, independently of his parents. Below is another example, this time from Cyprus:

My father would bring us over, he has eight brothers and sisters, my mum has six, and most of them were living over here. So he would take us around the whole of the island, you know, meeting them, making sure we knew our roots, and knew our family, knew who we were, you know. And that was what did it [made my mind up about moving to Cyprus]. I never wanted to go back home [from these visits], never; whenever we were leaving I'd be, like, 'I don't want to go, let's stay here.' … So I always wanted to [move to Cyprus] one day, yeah, yeah, I did. My mum and dad, you know, I think every Cypriot family over there [in England] always says, you know, 'once we get ourselves [this or that], once we get enough [money], once we're old … we'll go back'; it's always like that, I think it's inside them somewhere … they always want to go home.

(Alexandra, 37, Greek Cypriot)

What is also interesting about the way the parental narrative of return is passed on is that it often results in the second generation turning it into reality, whereas the parents themselves do not return, at least not when their children do. Wessendorf (2009: 9–11) found the same transgenerational syndrome in her Swiss-Italian study: the immigrant parents transfer the 'dream of return' to their children, and only the latter turn the dream into reality. Research that Tracey Reynolds (2008) carried out in the Caribbean develops this perspective more explicitly. According to Reynolds, the family narrative developed around the 'myth of return' is integral to the British-based second generation's return orientation; these narratives 'act as important social resources in sustaining the second generation's emotional attachment to the family homeland and in influencing the decision to return' – alongside, of course, other practical considerations (Reynolds 2008: 2).

Reflecting on relocation

In the final section of the article, we examine the themes the participants reveal when they talk about their recent lives in Greece and Cyprus. As this is a broad agenda, we focus mainly on the contrasts that participants draw when they compare their experiences of resettlement with their earlier childhood visits. We have already given some clues on how these comparisons play out: for instance the ways in which Greece and Cyprus have changed over the intervening period.

'Now you have to speak Greek': no longer a visiting child

The change of 'atmosphere' among family and friends – less present and welcoming than remembered from childhood visits – is the first theme we explore. Here is a typical reaction:

> Everyone [in the family] seems very busy and I found out very quickly that it's one thing when you're here on holiday and everyone makes time for you, and a different thing when you actually move over here, 'cause everyone just kinda disappears. I didn't get that help, or I didn't feel that hospitality that I got when I was here on holiday, I just felt very, very much alone. And I had no friends, 'cause when I was here [on holiday] I was here with my family, and I didn't make any friends. So I was just really really alone.
>
> (Theodora, 28, Greek Cypriot)

Angelo experienced a similar 'shock' when he returned to Cyprus, but he shows a greater awareness of the reasons for the difference ('I came as an adult, not as a child') and even suggests that the lack of a warm family welcome was a good thing as it acted as a reality check:

> The most exciting thing for me was to see all my family. But none of them showed any interest, and … that was a really big shock; to me it was so different from my experiences as a child, which I think I was clinging to, as a

means of making my stay here a rationalized thing, the decision to move to Cyprus. So that was what changed: I came as an adult, not as a child, which is very different. … In fact it has been good in a sense that it has killed that romanticized image of mine, that came from childhood – it has brought me down to earth.

(Angelo, 36, Greek Cypriot)

Over in Greece, Rebecca, who had relocated from Germany, experienced a different reaction because she had gone back to her father's village where she was made to feel she had to 'behave' in a different way – as her father's daughter and speaking Greek.

I came out of Germany where I lived a normal teenager life, in a normal environment as far as I was concerned, into a little village where rules and regulations … you know, you're on show when you walk through the village, and all that stuff. … And the other thing I remember, you might call it cultural, was this idea that as soon as I was here, as soon as I moved here … all of a sudden there was this expectation. 'Now you have to speak and understand Greek', because you have to show off as the daughter of a Greek man that you can be Greek too. … I've felt this pressure all the time.

(Rebecca, 41, Greek German)

This quote brings out the importance of the urban/rural context of the 'return' and how, in particular, it reveals different gender relations. Rebecca's experience in a village in Greece resonates with the reactions of young Swiss-Italian women going back to their parental villages in southern Italy. Here, too, gender relations are still 'traditional' and expectations of behaviour and employment roles are highly constrained. Young single women are unable to (in fact they are forbidden to) live on their own, so they stay with family members. This makes them 'feel constantly controlled by their relatives, and gossip in the villages is suffocating' (Wessendorf 2007: 1095). On the other hand, our research reveals how gender dynamics can also work the other way round: some young women look to Greece and a large city there as an 'escape' from the gendered claustrophobia of the family-dominated ethnic community in the diaspora.

This in turn opens up other debates about how much the 'homeland' societies have changed over the years (often two or three decades) separating childhood visits from adult relocation. Within this domain, two themes were dominant in the narratives – immigration and consumerism – and the 'returnees' were often harshly critical of both. These criticisms were sometimes ideological, but often they expressed surprise and disappointment that globalization had sullied their holiday experiences or their parents' collective narratives of a 'pure, authentic' Greece or Cyprus.

15

'We too developed xenophobia': reactions to immigration

Both Greece and Cyprus have passed rapidly from being countries of mass emigration (until the 1970s) to countries of mass immigration during the 1990s and 2000s. Nowadays, Greece has more than a million immigrants (in a population of 11 million) whereas in (Greek) Cyprus there are an estimated 100,000 immigrants in a total population of 800,000 (Baldwin-Edwards 2004: 4; King and Thomson 2008). For many interviewees, this 'migration turnaround' (King et al. 1997) corresponds to the period between their childhood visits and their adult return; hence, large numbers of immigrants and a *de facto* multi-ethnic society are part of the social setting with which they have had to come to terms as settled residents. Their responses to this new and perhaps unanticipated reality are quite mixed and ambivalent. To some extent, one can see these reactions in the light of their upbringing in their birth countries, where in nearly all cases they grew up in large or medium-sized urban centres surrounded by other immigrant nationalities. On the other hand, many of them also described their upbringing as in a tight Greek or Greek-Cypriot community with little interaction with other ethnic or migrant groups, or even with the host society outside school. The reality of large-scale recent immigration to Greece, primarily from Albania, and to Cyprus, from a diverse mix of East European and Asian countries, often challenged the participants' memories of an older, 'traditional' Greece or Cyprus. Yet, they had been living in countries with longstanding immigration histories and, with the exception of Germany where Greek migrants were invariably guestworkers or low-class restaurateurs, rather multicultural social models. Here are some reactions:

> We too developed xenophobia, we Greeks changed too, we have become more suspicious. … It is simply that Greece was not prepared economically and socially to put up with this [immigration]. … The Germans were ready when they took this step to bring in foreigners. Greece was not ready and consequently people have changed.
>
> <div align="right">(Martha, 30, Greek German)</div>

> In Cyprus it has changed quite a lot from a country of out-migration, like our parents who moved to England; now it has lots of new immigrants. … I like it, I like it. Um, who am I to say for people not to come into the country – I'm for everyone to live where they want, and I think multicultural places make it very, erm … if it weren't for the crime … 'cause Cypriot people aren't criminals. … On the whole there's no crime in Cyprus, and now where all the different cultures are coming in, it's becoming more and more … it's gonna spoil it a little bit here.
>
> <div align="right">(Angela, 41, Greek Cypriot)</div>

The second of the above quotes is a perfect illustratration of the kind of ambiguity that runs through many of the interviewees' reactions to immigration.

They clearly understood its inevitability as part of globalization and development and were at times able to recognize its historical links with earlier phases of migration to Germany, the UK or North America. They generally welcomed the advent of a multicultural society, but had reservations about the scale of recent immigration, the country's unpreparedness for it, the high rates of 'illegality', cultural difference and its possible link to crime. Note how Angela's account slips from multiculturalism to crime. At the same time, some participants were very critical of the racist attitudes of Greeks and Cypriots towards immigrants from poor countries. Marcus on the other hand denied Cyprus was truly multicultural and focused more on trying to 'explain' Cypriots' racism towards foreigners as unintentional and based on ignorance rather than malice:

> … and from a country that's been ethnically cleansed 35 years ago [referring to the Turkish partition of the island and the population exchange of 1974], all these new faces are coming: Nigerians, Cameroonians, Sri Lankans, Indians. It's not so much racism [towards them], it's curiosity and ignorance that provokes this kind of reaction, it's not maliciousness. I don't find Cypriots particularly vicious in their attitudes, just ignorant of other cultures, because they've been divided and they've been kept pure all of this time, and anyone who has been born in the last 35 years has grown up in this vacuum. It's not multicultural, despite the shitloads of immigrants that are in the country, 'cause they're second-class citizens, they're an underworld, they're the cleaners, they're the people that dig up the road, they're not part of society.
>
> (Marcus, 35, Greek Cypriot)

'Cypriot girls are so Prada, Gucci, Audi': on materialism and snobbery

Alongside immigration were woven a series of discourses about globalization, Europeanization, materialism, consumerism, sharply rising living costs and snobbery. Let us return to the interview with Marcus.

> One of the things I forgot to add to my hate list – 'What do I hate about Cyprus?' – is that the girls, people generally, from their twenties onwards, let's say from 20 to 40, I mean Cypriots, are very snobby, uptight. It would be nice to find a relationship with a Cypriot girl, but some of them are so Prada, Gucci, Audi, how much money you got. … And they're nowhere near as friendly as the English girls, to have a relationship; to be completely cool about something, to go up to a girl in a bar and say 'hi, would you like something to drink?' She'd be, like, 'yeah' and you start chatting away. In Cyprus you don't get that; you get this cold, like this [mimics a snobby look], they turn around, look you up and down, like you're a piece of crap. This is what I don't like about the younger generation in Cyprus. How can a culture that's so warm and welcoming come to split away from that? That hospitality that I experienced as a kid … seems to get less and less.

Part of the context for this has been the transformation of the Cypriot economy since the first generation emigrated in the 1950s and 1960s. No longer poor and rural, Cyprus has enjoyed high growth based on a productive mix of light industry, intensive agriculture, offshore services and tourism. These trends were well in evidence before Cyprus joined the EU in 2004 (King and Thomson 2008: 283–7). Meanwhile, second-generation migrants relocating from the expensive UK property market, especially from London, have been able to enter the Cypriot housing market at a high level and some are able to use liquidated assets to initiate a small business.

Greece has witnessed a paler version of the trends just outlined for Cyprus. The economic booster effect of joining the EU took place 20 years earlier, and the Greek economy has profound structural problems of inefficiency, unemployment and informality. Moreover, economic life appears to have become much more difficult since the country adopted the euro in 2002. Peter (73, Greek American), who had relocated to Greece in the early 1970s, emphasized the dramatic change in the cost of living during his long period of residence in the country:

> [Back then] the style of living was so easy and cheap. That is another big, big factor … it does not make economic sense to live here any more. … [Nowadays] Greece is very, very expensive – more expensive than the States and more expensive than most European countries. … When I lived here in the 1970s, you can't imagine how cheap it was. I mean, going out to eat was an everyday occurrence because it was so cheap … and the cost of living was just so low. … It's totally changed now.

From a different age group, Theodora (28, Greek Cypriot) mounted a similar critique of the materialism and rising cost of living in Cyprus in recent years, again making the historical comparison with the years of their childhood visits.

> It's all about how you look over here, it's so materialistic, and I don't know how they can do it, because it's so fuckin' expensive as well, because coming here on holiday I thought Cyprus was so much cheaper, but actually living here, and now that the euro has kicked in, it's really expensive. But everyone has to have a big house, they have to have their expensive car, they have to have their labels, they have to have their Louis Vuitton, and their Gucci … because they think it's fashionable or they saw someone else with it.

Closing the cycle: from childhood visits to child-rearing

Despite such harsh opinions towards change, they see the general social environment of Greece and especially Cyprus as favourable for nurturing the next generation – the children of the second-generation returnees. They thus repeat the generational migration cycle, with the experiences of one childhood reprised in bringing up the next.

Theodora, who was so critical of the materialism of Cyprus in the quote above,

came round, later in her interview, to a much more positive evaluation of the country as a place in which to bring up children. Like many interviewees, she focused particularly on the safety angle, but also mentioned the more gregarious social life and the physical environment, so favourable to outdoor activities:

> Don't get me wrong, I said a lot of bad things about Cyprus, but there is a lot of good things too. Like the safety … I've reached an age where I am like, 28 and I got a serious relationship, a boyfriend, and if I think about having a life together, about having a family, I'd be … could I raise a family in London? What life am I gonna give them? I would probably turn into my mum. As much as I hated that she was so strict with me, I would have even more reason to be strict with them now … you hear about stabbings and all. Whereas over here kids have such a wonderful life, they have a better upbringing – they go to school, half-eight, they finish at midday, they can go to the beach, they have the mountains, they can be safe, you know, as long as you mix them with the right people. And you do socialize more here, although the sun can make you feel a bit lazy … Like now, it's September, every night something is going on, someone is coming over, and you can go on walks, have activities, weekends away, day trips away; we go out more than I ever did in England.

There are strong parallels between the arguments Theodora raised about Cyprus and the findings on Caribbean second-generation return migration. Research by Reynolds (2008: 15–16) and by Phillips and Potter (2009: 244–5) reveals many cases of second-generation British-born people taking their young children to the Caribbean to bring them up (or to have children there) in a 'safer' environment. Phillips and Potter (2009) describe this type of return as the 'lure of the ancestral home' offering a better quality of life. Yet, in other respects, this child-oriented pattern of second-generation return embodies a certain irony. As Reynolds (2008: 12) puts it:

> It is perhaps a strange paradox that first-generation parents migrated from the Caribbean to the UK in search of better opportunities and economic success for themselves and their children. Yet their children are motivated to return back to their parents' homeland to achieve those same ambitions for themselves and their own children.

Moreover, with this return of the second generation, plus their children – are they third-generation or the second generation of the second generation? – the cycle starts to repeat itself. These children, born in Greece or Cyprus of returned second-generation Greek or Cypriot parents, will have their own transnational ties back to their parents' birth countries (Germany, the USA and the UK); maybe their grandparents still live there. Evgenia, now aged 54, relocated from her birth-country, the United States, in 1977 to Greece; she and her family took a holiday back to the USA in 1994; for the children it was a trip to their 'other homeland'.

Oh, it was fun. The kids loved it … they really liked it a lot. They considered Boston fantastic. My son was … because my son is into athletics … when he saw all those playing fields, the baseball fields [laughs]. … He didn't want to leave. No, they like the States a lot. We took them to Disneyland you know, and of course we went back so they could meet the other side of the family where I grew up.

Conclusion

Taking Greece and (Greek) Cyprus as homeland countries, in this article we have examined the discourses and memories of childhood visits paid to these homelands by second-generation Greeks from Germany and the United States and Greek Cypriots from Britain. There is little exploration of this topic in the literatures on the second generation, return migration and transnationalism.

Return trips with parents are generally remembered in glowing terms, for reasons of climate, time spent by the sea, the warmth of family and above all *freedom*. Children were given much more leeway to do things, go to places and stay up late than their parents would have permitted in the respective immigration countries. The generally 'safe' environment in Greece and Cyprus, and the surrounding network of cousins and relatives who can be 'trusted' to look after the holidaying children is the usual explanation for this. However, holiday visits are also times of the year when the normal boundaries of family discipline are relaxed, matching the generally relaxed mood of parents on vacation.

Teenagers, however, found the visits less enjoyable and more constraining – again this is often true of teenagers' views of holidays with parents. Some interviewees remembered being bored at that age on family holidays, or feeling constantly watched and judged (see Levitt 2009, referring to Indian Gujarati return visits).

Although some interviewees articulated a more or less direct causal connection between childhood visits and the subsequent decision to return to live in the homeland as adults, often such direct links were not evident and the adult return was seen as an individual project, albeit sometimes beset by family circumstances. Reactions to the experience of longer-term settlement were rather consistent among second-generation returnees: the warmth of the 'family embrace' fades as the pressures of everyday living take over and both Greece and Cyprus have 'moved on' since the childhood years. Socially and economically, returnees experience both countries as having become less 'authentic' and more consumer oriented. With varying reactions, they pinpoint immigration as a significant recent phenomenon. Joining the euro zone appears to have made both countries much more expensive places in which to live.

Our final point concerns how the 'returnees' interpreted this modernization and Europeanization of Greece and Cyprus. One reaction noted from Cyprus was surprise at how liberal their Cypriot cousins' upbringing had become, compared with their own sheltered childhoods in supposedly more progressive, cosmopolitan societies in the USA or northern Europe. There are complex processes going on here to do with rural vs. urban cultures, class and generational differences, and host and homeland

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communities. Most Greek and Cypriot migrants originated from rural areas and left their homeland at a time of economic stagnation. Since their departure, economic and cultural globalization has enveloped their homelands, along with EU integration. Tourism, too, has been a powerful agent of modernization, while rural–urban migration has drained the traditional character out of village communities. Meanwhile, the original migrants have clung to their old values, reproducing microcosms of rural Greece and Cyprus in urban London, Stuttgart or the Greek districts of New York. Levitt (2009) refers to this propensity of migrants abroad to hold onto traditional values from the homeland as the 'ossification effect', seeing it as a spatio-temporal disjuncture between emigrants' and non-migrants' actual and metaphorical journeys. This effect accentuates the contradictions and halfway positionalities of second-generation migrants both when they visit and when they relocate in the long term; moreover, the relationships can fundamentally change between these two types of return encounter. All are part of the 'human dynamics of migrant transnationalism' (Carling 2008), within which the second generation, and their visits home, are an under-researched component.

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Notes

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2. One of the authors (Christou 2006) had tried and tested these arrangements in an earlier study.
3. We annotate each interview extract with a code: pseudonym, age and migrant group.

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