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Andrea Pelliccia

Ulysses undecided

Greek student mobility in Italy

Presentation of
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To Panagiota and Nicola

Always keep Ithaca in your mind.
To arrive there is your final destination.
But do not hurry the voyage at all.
It is better for it to last many years,
and when old to rest on the island,
rich with all you have gained on the way,
not expecting Ithaca to offer you wealth.
Ithaca has given you the beautiful journey.
Without her you would not have set out on the road.
Nothing more does she have to give you.

And if you find her poor, Ithaca has not deceived you.
Wise as you have become, with so much experience,
you must already have understood what Ithacas mean.

Konstantinos Petrou Kavafis, *Ithaca*

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Presentation

International students are a very important aspect of migration and must be considered one of the most significant expressions of the phenomenon of mobility, not least because of their potential impact on the construction of an intercultural society.

Indeed, the international mobility of university students is a phenomenon that has existed since the birth of universities in Europe from the Middle Ages. However, the current political and economic framework, which sees an ever-growing collaboration between different European countries, has certainly made possible the development of this type of exchange that has been stimulated in many ways by the European Institutions.

The increase in migration for study does not concern only Europe. In fact, the presence of foreign students in universities is perceived by all the economically advanced nations as a chance to obtain a flow of skilled immigration which will help raise the cultural heritage, and thus the competitiveness, of the country. Therefore, in recent decades a strong competition between the most economically advanced countries for ensuring the presence of foreign students in their universities has developed. This has given them advantages of various types, such as the possibility to obtain a residence permit in the host country, even after the achievement of the qualification, to find a job suited to their skills. This situation has led to a rapid growth in the number of university students who choose to do all their course of study in an another country: according to OECD data, the growth in the internationalisation of higher education has accelerated during the past 34 years, reflecting the socio-economic globalisation and the ability to extend and increase universities. Over the past three decades the number of students enrolled outside their country of citizenship has increased dramatically, rising from 0,8 million in 1975 to 3,7 million in 2009. However, the number of students enrolled outside their country of citizenship has increased by 6,4% between 2008 and 2009, a slower

pace compared with 8% from 2007 to 2008. This decreased mobility may be a reflection of the financial crisis and reduced incentives for study abroad.

However, compared to other OECD countries, the Italian universities host a very low percentage of foreign students: although in recent years they have increased substantially, they represented only 3,3% of total enrolment in the academic year 2009-2010, against an OECD average of about 8,5%. Throughout the second half of the twentieth century, foreign students in Italian universities were much less numerous, with one exception: the Greek students.

Between 1954 and 1987, over 15.000 Greek students graduated in Italy. The flows of foreign students into our country were for a long period strongly characterised and conditioned by the presence of Greek students who, at the same time, in a few years reached up to 70% of the total of foreign students and never dropped to below 43%.

Certainly, we can assume some reasons for this strong presence, such as Greek political affairs, the difficulty for Greek students in accessing university courses regarding some subjects in their country (specifically medicine and architecture) and geographical contiguity. However, the presence of Greek students in Italian universities, even when they were little affected by the internationalisation process, represents an interesting sociological phenomenon that deserves further study.

This phenomenon is the subject of a specific scientific study presented in this book by Andrea Pelliccia who, after having outlined the history of emigration for study from Greece and in particular towards Italy, presents the results of a quality survey conducted by the author among Greek students enrolled in universities in Rome. This survey, carried out between March and December 2011, comprehensively deals with all the major sociological implications of this particular case of migration for study, from the push and pull factors to arrive at the problems of Greek students in the Roman universities and their interaction with the Italian society.

The method used is primarily that of in-depth interviews, which enabled the author to delve into a deeper human contact with the interviewees and to interpret their migratory path not in terms of "cold" percentage, but, using his words, "in terms of struggle and circum-

stances", allowing for an understanding of the processes used "to cope with uncertainty and to create new interpretations, hopes and expectations".

The results of this study bring to light many aspects and dynamics of mechanisms of inclusion (but also exclusion) of this important component of the foreign presence in the universities and society of our country, which can be extremely useful to undertake actions aimed at improving the attractiveness of the Italian academic system for students of other nationalities.

In the conclusions, the author discusses the problems faced by the young Greek university graduates in the transition from education to work: in fact, in 2009 Greece was one of the states with the highest unemployment rates among university graduates (13,2% against an OECD average of 5,7%). Several explanations that have been given in various studies are presented by the author which are the same offered to justify a similar situation in Italy: on one hand, "over-education", being that the Greek education system produces a number of graduates more than what can be absorbed by the domestic labour market; on the other hand, the poor connection between the university system and the national economic system. The author also exposed the reform processes that had been suggested to remedy this situation and avoid the massive brain drain from Greece which, started in the 1950s, has further increased since the 90s of the twentieth century. It remains to be seen how the current worsening economic crisis and the public spending sharp cuts in Greece will allow for the implementation of these measures, which, however, are similar to those put in place by recent reforms in the Italian university system and that, in this case, have had no evident positive effect.

The author still hopes that education could be the key to overcoming the current crisis in Greece: we share this conclusion and extend it to all European societies.

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Greek intellectual migration

1.1. Greek students abroad: a never ending story

The international literature does not have that much information on the phenomenon of mobility of Greek students abroad. This can be attributed to either a lack or fragmentation of the scientific production on this topic, or to the absence of the Greek State before 1821. However, we have some information that allows us to reconstruct, even partially, the different stages and the evolution of this phenomenon. We know, for example, that the first flow of Hellenic intellectual emigration into Italy began in the fifteenth century. In fact, after the fall of Constantinople into the hands of the Ottomans, many Byzantine intellectuals would go to the courts of the main Italian cities such as Venice, Padua, Bologna and Florence. This wave continued during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a period in which Italy, increasingly, was identified as a major cultural destination by members of the elite and the Greek-orthodox exponents of the Ionian Islands who, at that time, were under Venetian rule (Kornetis 2007). In the nineteenth century, Koumas (1832) and Moraitinis (1877) describe the transfer of hundreds of students from Greece to European universities, mostly Italian, French and German. Sideris (1989) records the presence of 840 Greek students at the University of Pisa from 1806 until 1861.

Since 1837, however, the situation changed drastically and the number of Greek students decreased. This can be attributed in part to the relative decline in the standard of the universities in several Euro-

pean countries and the reduction in the number of their local and for-
eign students (Charle, Verger 1994). The main reason is, however, the
founding of the University of Athens in 1837 and the role played by
the university in creating the idea of a national culture (Dimaras 1987;
Reading 1996). In the Greek case, the national culture coincided with
the process of irredentism concentrated in the Μεγάλη Ιδέα (Great I-
dea). This involved the use of any means to attract a larger number of
university students (no taxes, downsizing of the criteria for admission
to some faculties, easier exams etc.).

Despite this euphoric wave of nationalism, the development project
toward the University, considered as fertile ground for Hellenism, ex-
perienced a decline due to factors both endogenous and exogenous.
Since 1870, and especially in the period from 1890 to 1922, there was
a decrease in the number of students at the University of Athens and
the preference of the Greeks who lived outside the Kingdom in send-
ing their children to study in American colleges (Paparrigopulos 1873;
White 1940; Freely 2000; Kyprianos 2007). Similar processes are ob-
served within the Kingdom. On the one hand, the criticism toward the
situation and the quality of the university system was reinforced. On
the other hand, the lack of skilled technical personnel increased more
and more. All this took place within the same period and in the pres-
ence of an unprecedented "university and academic market" in Ger-
many and in the German-speaking countries (Balachamis 1971).

Thus the first wave of Greek students to European universities, es-
pecially German ones, took shape. At the end of the nineteenth cen-
tury, the flow of Greek students headed for Germany and France, fol-
lowed by other countries such as Switzerland, Belgium, Austria and
Italy (Manitakis 2010, p. 133). Great Britain and the United States
were not yet the main destinations for study. In effect, after 1870,
Germany was the main destination for the Greek students, as for many
students from other countries. Due to their low presence, however, in
1889 Greek students were included in "other European countries"
(167 students). However in 1886, of the 1682 foreign students in
German universities, 51 were Greek. Besides Germany, another four
French and German speaking countries attracted Greek students, in
particular France and Belgium (respectively 85 students in 1894 and
20 in 1888) and then, Switzerland and Austria (Karady 1992).

In 1890 the number of Greek students abroad decreased due to the raisins crisis, the economic failure and the war in 1897. The trend was reversed in the twentieth century which saw a period in which students chose as their destination French speaking countries. First of these was France at the expense of universities of the German-speaking countries, notably Germany and Austria (Ministère de l'Instruction Publique et des Beaux – Arts 1910). The statistics of the host countries record the presence of 32 Greek students in Belgium in 1909, 83 in German universities in 1911 and 134 in France in 1913.

The number of Greek students in foreign universities increased after 1920. The main destination country remained France (474 students in 1930). However, there were two new poles of attraction: the United States, the second destination of study since 1930 after France (99 students in the academic year 1930-31) and Great Britain (37 students in 1922) (Du Bois 1956).

In any case, the economic crisis of 1929 and the emergence of totalitarian regimes in Europe, led to an overall reduction in the student movements, particularly in Germany. So by the end of the 1930, the number of Greek students in European universities and in the United States did not seem to exceed 300 units.

The situation changed radically after the Second World War, becoming particularly prominent. This was due to the increase in the selection process of the access system of the Athens and Thessaloniki universities in the early 1950s. According to UNESCO, the number of Greek students in 1960 reached 8717 and from then on doubled every decade: in 1970 14.147 and 31.509 in 1980 (Kyprianos 1995, p. 606). As regards the incidence of Greek students on the total of foreign students, since the second World War, Greece was for a long time the country with the highest number of foreign students in relation to the national population. At the international level, in 1987 Greece was the fourth country by the number of students abroad (after China, Iran and Malaysia), while it was the first in Europe with almost 35.000 students studying outside national borders and with 3,4 students abroad per 1000 inhabitants, whereas the percentage of other European countries was much lower (0,2-0,4%) (UNESCO 1987). The causes of this excessive growth are mainly identified in the reform by the Education Ministry (1964-65), which further stifled the university system, and

during the regime of the Colonels (1967-74) who drove thousands of young students off the territory. They were especially directed towards Italy.

In the period 1983-1993 the number of Greek students underwent a decline (Fakiolas 1997, p. 142). This decrease was due, also in this case, to several endogenous and exogenous factors. In effect, during this period in Greece there were internal changes at the universities and legislative measures that facilitated their stay in the Greek universities and put obstacles on mobility to universities abroad. First of all, the expansion of the Greek university system through the founding of new universities and the law 1268/1982 allowed students to transfer for serious health reasons or for family reasons. Then, there were the decisions taken by the Greek government to accept the transfer of students from former Communist countries (mainly Romania and Yugoslavia) for security reasons. At the same time, the slowdown in income growth in Greece since 1979, the repeated austerity policies implemented since the mid 1980s and a reduction in the scholarships certainly did not help to stimulate student mobility abroad. Instead, among the exogenous factors, appear the practical difficulty for students to find work during their studies (especially in France and Germany), the rise in the requirements of the foreign universities towards Greek students following the recommendations of the EU and the extremely strict conditions for the recognition of equivalence of qualifications acquired in some universities in Greece.

Until 1990, there were two main attraction countries: the Federal Republic of Germany and the United States. Italy joined these two countries in 1968, asserting its supremacy for a long time. Moreover, the role of magnetism of the Balkan countries emerged, in the years around 1970 and 1980, and then of Eastern Europe. The significant flow of Greek students, in early 1980, toward the socialist countries was explained by factors such as (Fakiolas 1997, pp. 128-30):

- the granting of scholarships through Greek trade unions and left political parties;

- the low cost of the studies (in Romania, for example, costs for taxes, health insurance and housing averaged $ 200-300 per month);

- interest in various academic courses (chemistry, chemical engineering, exploration, extraction and transportation of oil);

- the promotion of local language courses;
- the geographical proximity;
- the low cost of travel;
- the linguistic links (a linguistic minority had lived in Romania until the period between the two world wars and a considerable number of the population of northern Greece was still speaking a Romanian dialect);
- hints of corruption in passing exams.

Since 1995, the flow started to soar. According to the OECD (2002, p. 115), the number of Greek students in the member countries (covering almost all countries that host Greek students) went from 36.638 in 1995 to 57.825 units in 1999. In the following years the flow remained at high levels. In 2001, for example, the OECD estimated that the number of students amounted to 55.064. The main countries of destination for the Greek students were the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy and France.

In mid-1990, the United Kingdom, which until then had recorded just 10% of Greek students, became the main destination country. Among the 28.879 Greek students abroad in 1994, more than 41% went to study in this country (10.929). The number increased gradually from 1997 and ended up at an enormous size in 2001, reaching more than half of the total Greek students enrolled at foreign universities (28.860 students from 55.064).

Therefore, in early 1990, we observe an explosive growth in the number of Greek students in the United Kingdom, at the expense of countries like Italy, Germany and France. This growth was related to several factors. First, the increase in post-graduate institutions in this country, as opposed to the absence of structural studies of this type in Greece, at least until mid 1990. While a large number of undergraduate students (20%) were directed towards the most traditional destinations (Italy, the Balkans and Eastern Europe), post-graduate students were directed almost exclusively to certain western European countries and the United States. For example, among the 5610 post-graduate students in 1994, 4834 were directed to three countries: 3476 to the United Kingdom, 714 to the United States and 644 to France. Other factors were represented in the shorter term programs, the aboli-

tion or lowering of tuition fees (for post-graduate students it ran to 1500 pounds a year), the creation of active policies to attract Greek students (advertising, local English language schools), the reduction, at some universities, in the requirements for admission. In addition, the increasingly widespread use of English, supported by the good reputation of many British universities and the relatively low cost of flights connecting Athens to London, reinforced the tendency to prefer the UK to other countries (Fakiolas 1997, p. 128).

Despite the great number of Greek students who went abroad, from 2001 on we have witnessed a downward trend. According to Eurostat data, in 1998 the incidence of students who were studying in the EU-27 of the total number of those enrolled in Greek universities was 13,8%, decreasing by 5,7% in 2007. This decrement was due to the increase in the number of university students in Greece, both of the graduate and post-graduate level.

However, despite this decrease, the data confirm the phenomenon of "transnational mobility" or "brain circulation". In fact in the EU-27, during the entire period 1998-2007, the average percentage of Greek students abroad, compared to the local university population, was approximately 9% compared to 2,2% of the other EU-27 countries. It is possible that one of the effects of the Greek economic crisis will be a further decline in Greek students abroad.

According to OECD data, in 2009 more than 34.000 Greeks studied abroad. From the U.S. to Australia, from Norway to China it is likely to come across Greek students who left to get a degree. Despite the expansion of the university system in the last ten years with new departments and over 80.000 admissions a year, thousands of students continue to choose the path of migration. Indeed, according to OECD data, in 2009, 34.715 students studied abroad. It is significant that the preference of the studies chosen is still closely tied to the traditional professions (doctor, engineer, lawyer, economist). In effect, all degrees that in the post-dictatorship guaranteed good wages and high social status.

In 2009, in absolute terms, Greece was represented in the top ten OECD countries and among the top five EU member states by number of students abroad. In proportion to the entire local population, among the EU-27 countries of the OECD, Greece was among the top eight

for exodus of students.

In 2005-2009, more than 8 out of 10 students (42.189 students, that is 84,8%) chose to study in EU countries, Switzerland and Norway. 21.906 students constituted 52% of the total, while 20.283 post-graduate students represented the remaining 48%.

The Greek students continue to study in the United States and Canada. From these countries the request of 3796 qualifications (7,6% of total) was presented to the Interdisciplinary Organization for recognition of academic and information (DOATAP), equally distributed between graduation (1928, 50,7%) and post-graduation (1862, 49,3%) (Lakasa 2011).

As for the remaining European countries, the request for recognition of university degrees 2825 (5,6%) was presented , most of which were acquired in Eastern Europe. They were largely graduate titles (2.579, 91%) compared to just 246 post-graduate qualifications. The degrees acquired in Asia (392, 0,8%), Africa (194, 0,4%) and Central and South America (54, 0,1%) represented less than 1%.

The UK remains the country that attracts the largest number of Greek students. In fact, from British universities came the 50,97% of graduate qualifications, the 69,21% of post-graduate qualifications and the 51,01% of PhD titles. In the decade 1999-2009, Great Britain was the most popular destination with nearly half of all Greek students abroad (47,4%). Italy, Germany and the United States continue to attract Greeks with percentages of 14,6%, 13,4% and 4,7%, respectively.

Table 1. The main countries of destination of Greek students abroad (absolute values) - Years 1960-2009

Country of destination	Year										
	1960	1970	1980	1990	1997	2001	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
TOTAL	8.717	14.147	31.509	32.184	53.999	55.064	44.512	40.654	38.042	34.196	34.715
United Kingdom	180	795	1.993	3.115	17.073	28.860	19.685	17.676	16.051	12.626	12.034
Germany	2.834	1.942	5.417	6.434	8.283	8.017	6.552	6.268	6.077	5.627	5.771
Italy	1.096	6.752	12.435	5.432	6.994	8.874	6.390	5.473	5.054	4.537	4.293
United States	1.200	1.968	4.220	3.904	3.365	2.401	2.125	2.162	2.030	1.983	1.865
France	435	528	4.037	2.659	2.931	2.566	2.040	2.014	1.952	1.926	1.868

Source: Elaboration on OECD and UNESCO data. From 2001 to 2009, OECD, *Education at a Glance*. For the other years, UNESCO, *Statistical Years Book*

Table 2. Greek students enrolled abroad by country of destination (%)

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
United Kingdom *	44,2	43,5	42,2	36,9	34,7
Germany **	14,7	15,4	16	16,5	16,6
Italy	14,4	13,5	13,3	13,3	12,4
United States *	4,8	5,3	5,3	5,8	5,4
France	4,6	5,0	5,1	5,6	5,4
Turkey	2,4	2,4	2,3	2,6	2,4

Source: Elaboration on OECD data, *Education at a Glance*
* For the years 2005, 2006 e 2007, the data relate to the country of residence
** Advanced research programs excluded

The destination is also chosen according to the studies that they want to undertake. According to DOATAP data, in Britain they study mainly engineering and economics, in France psychology and fine arts, in the Balkans (Bulgaria and Serbia) medicine. There are also requests for the recognition of university degrees from Turkish universities, where Greek students study mostly engineering, economics, education, and English; from African universities, above all from Egypt, where they choose disciplines such as engineering, veterinary medicine and law; and South Africa where they study mainly English, psychology and economics. As regards other countries, on top of the list for the application of the recognition of university qualifications, appear Syria (for engineering, fine arts and law), Jordan (history, biology and dentistry) and, finally, Australia (for education, English, en-

gineering, psychology and biology).

We have seen how the number of Greek university students abroad is high, from the last decades of the nineteenth century to the present day. The flow took shape in the post war period and extended at the beginning of 1980. It suffered a decline until 1995 and then reached a peak after 1997. After 2001 it decreased but preserved a considerable numerical importance.

How can one explain the phenomenon of the high mobility of Greek students abroad? One of the most common explanations is the "closure" of the Greek universities. That being the difficulty of being admitted into them. This explanation is not likely to be unfounded, but it could be simplistic. Undoubtedly, the growing number of students abroad is also determined by the closure of Greek universities up until 1981 with a break in the year 1960. In this period, the number of students in Greece reached very low levels and the "closure" of the university was in strong contradiction to the rapid increase in students abroad and the socio-economic transformation of Greek society.

At the international level, the opening and the increased accessibility to foreign universities allowed many Greeks to easily enrol. Due to changes in the Greek economy on the one hand, especially after 1958, many Greeks, even farmers, could send their children to study abroad, particularly in the new and cheap destination countries. First of all in Italy, later in the Balkans and finally in Eastern Europe. Moreover, there was the flow of students toward the United States and especially the former West Germany due to the presence of relatives who had emigrated there.

As argued by Kyprianos, the hypothesis of cause and effect of the closure of Greek universities and the mobility of Greek students abroad can also be observed in reverse. In fact, the opening of the Greek universities since 1981 has resulted in the stabilisation and slight decrease in the flow to foreign countries. The question is why did the flow to universities abroad reach enormous proportions from 1995 and especially from 1997, the exact year in which the number of students at Greek universities started growing again after the "freezing" of the Mitsotakis government (in the period 1995-2002 an increase of 80%)? Moreover, since mid-1990, post-graduate studies have been available in Greece.

Following the Kyprianos' reasoning, the opening of the Greek universities is not enough to stop the transfer abroad and does not exhaust the explanation for the mobility of Greek students. Greek higher education in the period 1870 to 1922 was open and easily accessible to those who wanted to go to university. However, during this period there were many Greeks who decided to study abroad. Something similar is happening today. Although post-graduate studies are available in Greece, there are many graduate students who choose to continue their studies at foreign universities.

So not only have issues strictly tied to the Greek university and its internal processes, such as accessibility, determined the mobility of students. From the birth of the Greek State until the period between the wars, as pointed out by Manitakis (2010, p. 133), «an almost uninterrupted stream of Greek students at the Western and Central European universities consolidated the custom of mobility abroad as one of the most important social and educational practices for the most influential strata in Greece». There is no doubt that mobility is directly related to the production and reproduction of knowledge in Greece.

As in many other countries, especially those not economically advanced, in the decade of 1870 the Greek authorities sent scholars toward what was considered the country of knowledge, that being Germany, with the aim of transferring scientific knowledge and skills to the homeland and thus contributing to production and internal growth.

In Greece, the image of the supremacy of a German education emerged after the victory of Prussia in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, and this argument was used by supporters of educational reform. One means for meeting the demand for qualified personnel, was to send young people abroad, especially to Germany. This tendency was strengthened after the marriage, in 1877, between the successor of King Constantino and the sister of the Emperor William, making the relations between the two countries closer and strengthening the major influence of Germany in Greece.

Even France, which was considered one of the most cosmopolitan countries at the beginning of the twentieth century, attracted a large number of Greek students. A good knowledge of French constituted an essential tool for official posts, above all for public offices.

The choice of a country or several countries, in different historical

periods, was strongly influenced and determined by the recognition of the role played by that country ― at a political, economic and cultural level ― on the international and the European scene. The distinction, the social prestige, and the fascination exercised by Western Europe therefore urged many young people from wealthy families to study at the top universities in Europe. In addition, this practise satisfied, the need for political and economic modernisation and the desire for liberation from the legacy of the "turcocratia" deemed anachronistic and oppressive.

Since the year 1950, this practice has been revived by two government agencies by awarding scholarships. In the academic year 2009-10, the Ministry of Education granted 80 scholarships abroad for undergraduate and post-graduate courses along with foreign summer seminars. Furthermore the Institute of State Scholarships (Iky), founded in 1952, granted 88 scholarships for post-graduate studies abroad in the academic year 2008-09. As many scholarships have been offered by non-state institutions. The same is true for the receiving countries interested in attracting young brains (brain gain) by awarding scholarships, with the intention of creating human capital to be used within their national borders[1].

In addition to those who are unable to access Greek universities, a substantial number of students go abroad to gain a degree or to undertake a post-graduate course with the aim of transferring and reinvesting in Greece the knowledge acquired. This practice is widespread in other countries, like China and Korea, who send their students to foreign universities, especially American, in order to introduce the technological know-how into their own countries. Studying abroad, especially at a good university in an economically advanced country, as well as allowing access to knowledge, confers a certain prestige and recognition. In other words, it is a fundamental means of social distinction: the degree is a guarantee of knowledge and respect, the country of destination gives a wealth of experience and the language learned provides a passport to participate in a cosmopolitan society.

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[1] Since the year 1920 many Greek students received scholarships from the following countries: France (1920), Britain (1938), Italy (1930), the United States (1948), Canada and Germany (post World War). See: Manitakis 2010

For reasons related to the history of the urban social strata of Greece, from 1890 onwards many young people have continued to snub Greek universities in favour of going to the best foreign universities.

In the present day, this phenomenon continues to persist. As the result of a rational choice and a desire for social and cultural investment, the mobility of Greek students, many of whom belong to rich families and come from private schools in Athens and Thessaloniki and from Western European universities in Greece (American Colleges, German, French and Italian schools, etc.), does not cease to exist. Although it is not exclusively a Greek peculiarity, the enrolment in a university abroad is usually the culmination of the path of previous studies.

1.2. Hellenic students in Italy: past and present

The first stream of Hellenic intellectual migration began in Italy in the fifteenth century. In fact after the fall of Constantinople into the hands of the Ottomans, many Byzantine intellectuals would go to the courts of the main Italian cities in the vein of Venice, Padua, Bologna and Florence. This wave continued during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a period in which Italy, increasingly, was identified as a major cultural destination by members of the Greek-orthodox Church and of the aristocracy of the Ionian Islands that at that time were under Venetian rule (Kornetis 2007, p. 152).

The nineteenth century was characterised by independence movements and processes of national unification of both countries. The reciprocal influence between domestic and foreign policies, the geographical proximity and the common cultural echoes, made the link between Greece and Italy even stronger. The spread in Italy of Philhellenism, based on the parallelism of the liberation struggle but also the classical heritage of the ancient Greek-Roman period, materialised with an attempt not only to strengthen trade and shipping links between the two countries, but also to promote the long tradition of cultural relations by granting scholarships to Hellenic students and by sending Italian scholars to Greece (Liakos 1995, p. 34).

During this turbulent period several Italian universities, above all

those of Pisa and Pavia, were attended by Greek intellectuals and students. Between 1806 and 1861 there were 840 Greek students at the University of Pisa (Sideris 1989) and, among these, there was also Dimosthenis Spanòpulos who was a follower of Mazzini during his university years (Liakos 1995, p. 48). At the Faculty of Law at the University of Pavia, among the most illustrious scholars, Dionysios Solomos, the initiator of neo-Hellenic poetry, a Greek independence supporter and author of the national anthem, should be noted.

In the twentieth century, the first significant flow of Greek students into Italy began in the early '50s, as a result of cultural agreements between Greece and Italy, for reparations as regarded the Second World War. Indeed, within a series of treaties and conventions aimed at creating an international collaboration in the cultural sector — based substantially on the equivalence of diplomas, the equivalence of periods of university studies and the recognition of foreign university qualifications — a bilateral agreement between Italy and Greece was signed in 1954. Until 1959, this agreement allowed Hellenic students to avoid taking the general knowledge test, but not the Italian language exam, to access the field of study chosen (Cammelli 1990, p. 35)These measures, together with previous post-conflict remedial operations in the university system (such as the abolition of taxes), the partial inadequacy of Greek universities and the favourable currency exchange, undoubtedly increased Greek student mobility in Italy. For this reason many young people preferred the universities of the main Italian cities to those of northern Europe. It must be said that, of the 1386 Greek students enrolled at Italian universities in 1955, the majority came from rural areas and belonged to medium-low socio-economic classes, unlike the urban elite minority that favoured countries like France, Germany and England (Papoutsis 1997, p. 68).

In the mid 1960s, the presence of Hellenic students increased, despite significant changes in the homeland such as new reforms in the university sector, the opening of new universities and the growth in the number of national enrolments.

As we shall see, the flow of Greek students intensified with the advent of the military dictatorship in Greece (1967-1974) until the academic year 1981-1982, after which the number of Hellenic students began to decline gradually while maintaining, at least until the mid

1980s, a very significant number.

During the period of dictatorship, Italy was an attractive destination not only for reasons related to study, the geographical proximity and socio-cultural affinity, but it was also a country which offered conditions of greater freedom and democracy. It was only in those years, in which in Italy a resistance movement against the junta of the colonels took shape, that the political, socio-cultural and historical scene of contemporary Greece drew the attention of public opinion and the Italian media. Thus in Italy a real process of politicisation by Greek students took off. It closely combined Greek culture and politics and the students became major players in the resistance movement against the Greek dictatorship and universities became places of socialisation for youth subcultures.

Although they were not recognised as refugees by international law, the students who fled the regime of the colonels were warmly welcomed in many Italian cities. The support often took the form of informal actions of assistance, but also in administrative practices, such as the issuing of temporary identity documents in order to ensure permanence in Italy and in the universities. Within the universities, the attitude of solidarity was characterised by special measures such as the abolition of fees, the granting of scholarships by the Ministry of Education and the common privilege of receiving "excellent" results (Kornetis 2007, p. 161).

In addition to the circulation of political reviews such as «Greece», «Free Motherland», «Free Voice of Greece», «Fight» and «Popular Unity» (Papoutsis 1997, p. 282), in Italy Greek students created several anti-regime groups based on their political provenance, such as "Minerva", belonging to the "Federation of Associations of Greek students in Italy" (OEFSI) and to the area of the left communist institutions, and the "Front" belonging to AMEE, the Greek Marxist-Leninist Communist Party. These associations, interacting closely with the movement of the new Italian left, also sought to initiate an awareness process of Italian society, inside and outside the universities, through socio-political campaigns, film festivals and individual actions, all aimed at denouncing what was happening in the Hellenic peninsula.

One of the most resounding cases that marked and characterised the

student resistance movement was the suicide of Kostas Georgakis. A student of geology and political activist in Genoa, as a member of the "Centre Union Party" (EK, "Ένωση Κέντρου") and the Italian branch of PAK ("Pan-Hellenic Liberation Movement", "Πανελλήνιο Απελευθερωτικό Κίνημα"), Kostas set himself on fire on September 19 1970 in Piazza Matteotti in Genoa, shouting "Long live a free Greece". His extreme gesture of protest against the dictatorship and his revelation that the military junta had infiltrated the Greek student movement in Italy, was considered a symbol of resistance against the military regime and, probably, the event precursor to subsequent student protests, such as the Polytechnic Protest of Athens (Papoutsis 2000; Klitsikas 2000).

As reported by Georgakis anonymously in a newspaper interview in Genoa, within the enormous mass of Greek students, there was an infiltration of informants close to the military junta who came to constitute the ESESI ranks ("National League of Greek students in Italy") with the intent of passing information on about young people who were a threat to the Greek dictatorship. Although remote, the Colonels were able to have control through repression operations against student activists: from visa restrictions and blocking the transfer of money through the Bank of Greece, to the rejection of applications submitted by students in Italy to obtain a military referral, to the withdrawal of passports and threats against the students' families (Kornetis 2007, p. 159; Papoutsis 1997, p. 9; Di Giovanni E.M., Ligini M., Pellegrini E. 2006).

In such a hot Italian political climate, characterised by the strategy of tension and repeated violent clashes in the streets, the strong antagonism between the Greek militant students of the left and the right persuasion resulted in tragic events which also involved young Italian activists. Among these, the death of Cesare Pardini, a young militant university student from the Lotta Libera at the CUS of Pisa, who was killed during the clashes in the "Battle of Pisa", and the murder of Mikis Mantakas, a neo-fascist militant of the "Fronte Universitario d'Azione Nazionale", who was hit by two bullets in Rome during the clashes in the streets during the Primavalle fire trial.

As mentioned above, in the year 1970 the flow of students from the Hellenic Republic intensified, reaching its peak in the academic year

1976-77 and recording its highest historical presence (16.593), not only in reference to Greek students but to any foreign component in the history of Italian universities.

It should be emphasised that, in those years, well over half of the Greek students who went abroad chose Italy as their destination for study. Undoubtedly, the extraordinary wave of Greek students, mostly male, significantly conditioned the general trend of the total enrolments of students from other countries. In this decade, the average number of Greek students enrolled in Italian universities was 54% of the total and foreign university population and, in 1976-77, even reached 59,4%. Compared with the overall number of enrolments of students from Europe, the incidence was even higher reaching 87,3%. Paradoxically this important quantitative presence clashed with the fact that just two years earlier (1974), the military junta had collapsed. This time, one of the reasons for this increase is perhaps due to the disappointment in the "not to be" yet expected university reform after the fall of the Greek dictatorship that strengthened, except for a slight decline in the academic year 1975-76 (with 10.418 enrolments), the Greek student migration (Cammelli 1990, p. 45).

After 1981 the flow began to decline. The succession of significant social and economic changes, first of all Greece's entry into the European Community, the creation of new Greek universities, the devaluation of the drachma and the introduction of a limited number of enrolments of foreign students into Italian universities, led to a gradual reduction in the number of Greek students in Italy, yet without significant effects on the importance of this presence. In fact, according to Unesco, in the early '80s Greece had proportionally the largest number of student emigrants at an international level. More than one Greek student in three chose Italy as country of destination and, in the period 1980-85, approximately 45% of the foreign student population present in that period in Italy, came from the Hellenic peninsula.

From 1954 to 1987, well over 15.000 Greek students obtained a degree in Italy. Greek consulates were even created in university towns such as Perugia, which in those years recorded a high number of Greek students, along with other cities such as Rome, Bologna, Florence, Naples, Bari and Padua. The main faculties chosen in order were: Medicine and Surgery, Pharmacology, Architecture, Engineer-

ing and Mathematical, Natural and Physical Sciences. The strong appeal for the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery should be underlined in light of the issue of access to this area of study in the homeland. Not surprisingly, one in three Greek students chose that faculty.

In the transition from the years 1980 to 1990 there was a further decline in the Greek student stream, with a decrease of 28,6% from 1988 to 1991. However, from this year until the academic year 1997-98, the number of Hellenic students enrolled in Italian universities tended upwards reaching 9.251 units (41,5% of the total of foreign students) and thus representing 13% of all Greek students abroad after the United Kingdom (31,6%) and Germany (15,3%).

From this point on, except for a slight increase in the academic year 2000-01, Greek student mobility in Italy continued to see a sharp and progressive decline of almost 60%, from 8531 in 1998 to 3439 in 2009. In 2002-03 Greece losts its primacy of student presence, surpassed by Albanians, but still continued to represent 24% of the total number of foreign students and 75% of students from the European Union. The number of registered students also experienced a sharp decline in the last decade, decreasing from 1.121 in 1999 to 197 in 2009.

Figure 1. Greek students enrolled in the Italian universities (absolute values) – Years 1955-2009
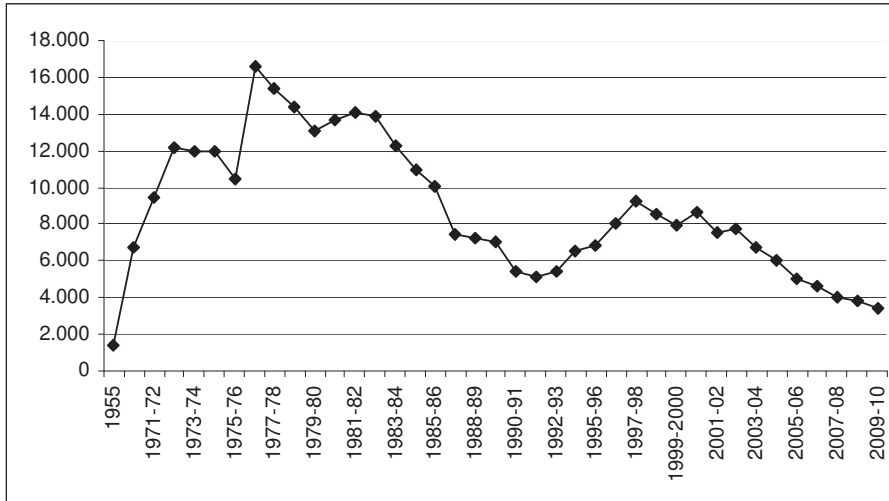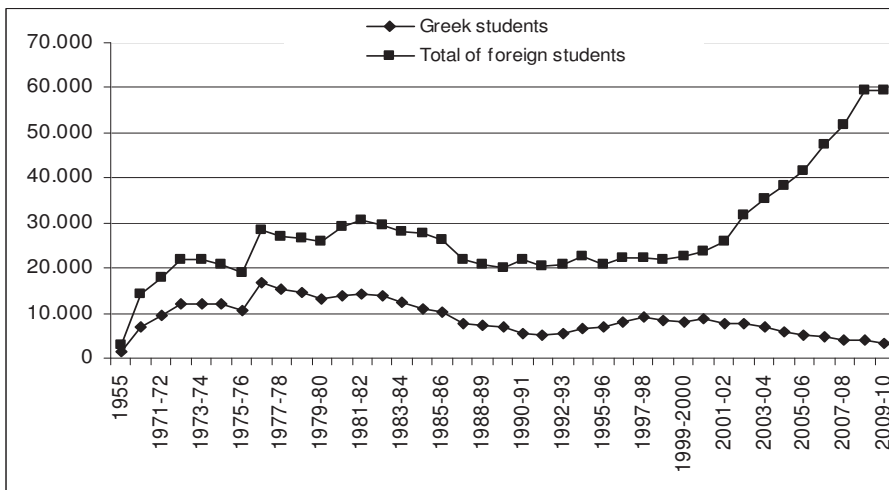
Source: Elaboration on Istat and Miur data. Until 1998-99 Istat. From 1999-2000 until 2009-10 Miur

Figure 2. Greek students and total of foreign students enrolled in the Italian universities (absolute values) – Years 1995-2009

Source: Elaboration on Istat and Miur data. Until 1998-99 Istat. From 1999-2000 until 2009-10 Miur

Despite the significant decline in Greek student mobility in Italy over the last twenty years, in reference to the current situation approximately 12,4% of all Greek university students abroad study in Italy. Italy, after the United Kingdom and Germany, continues to be historically one of the main countries of destination for students who come from Greece. In the academic year 2009-2010, from around 59.507 foreign students enrolled in Italian universities, 3439 are of Greek nationality (MIUR 2011). Although not as crucial as in the past to the general trend of foreign enrolments, the presence of students from the Hellenic peninsula has still significant percentages within a very diverse and articulated international composition. In effect, after Romanians, Greek students are the most numerous among those belonging to the EU-27 countries with an incidence of 25% and, immediately after Albania, China and Romania, keep their preponderance representing 5,8% of the non-Italian university population.

Table 3. Foreign enrolled, registered and graduated students (a.v. and %) - Academic year 2009-2010

ENROLLED			REGISTERED			GRADUATED		
Albania	12.029	20,2	Albania	2.057	16,9	Albania	1.349	19,9
China	4.401	7,4	Romania	1.234	10,1	**Greece**	455	6,7
Romania	4.064	6,8	China	1.080	8,9	Romania	348	5,1
Greece	3.439	5,8	Morocco	496	4,1	China	288	4.3
Cameroon	2.289	3,8	Cameroon	486	4,0	Germany	245	3,6
Morocco	1.545	2,6	Moldova	462	3,8	France	239	3,5
Total	59.507	100,0	Total	12.185	100,0	Total	6.764	100,0

Source: Elaboration on Miur data

The first six Italian regions, which show the greatest presence of Hellenic students, in orders are: Marche, Emilia Romagna, Lazio, Abruzzo, Puglia and Tuscany. The major cities, with their more attended respective universities, are Rome (Sapienza University, Tor Vergata and Roma Tre), Urbino (University of Urbino Carlo Bo), Bologna (Bologna University), Camerino (University of Camerino), L'Aquila (University of L'Aquila), Ferrara (University of Ferrara) and Bari (University of Bari Aldo Moro and the Polytechnic of Bari).

As in the past, the dominant disciplines are definitely those related to the hard sciences. In fact no less than 83% of the students are enrolled at universities belonging to this area of science. Suffice to say

that the faculties of Pharmacology and Medicine and Surgery alone account for 57% of enrolled students. After these faculties, there is the Faculty of Architecture, Engineering and Mathematical, Physical and Natural Sciences. Regarding the humanities and socio-economic area, the major faculties are Law, Economics, Literature and Philosophy (with a percentage of total enrolment by 6%, 3% and 3%). Finally, with respect to gender, there was a fairly equal distribution between male and female students in regard to the presence and the choice of the discipline (although the female students slightly prefer the humanities and socio-economic subjects).

Table 4. Greek students at the main university faculties (a.v. and %) – Academic year 2009-10

FACULTY	M	F	TOT	%
Pharmacology	536	462	998	29%
Medicine and Surgery	550	417	967	28%
Architecture	179	176	355	10%
Engineering	201	87	288	8%
Law	102	94	196	6%
Mathematical, Physical and Natural Sciences	70	85	155	5%
Economics	65	47	112	3%
Literature and Philosophy	33	66	99	3%
Veterinary medicine	25	23	48	1%
Modern Languages and Literatures	9	25	34	1%
Psychology	9	22	31	1%
Political science	18	6	24	1%
Education	3	20	23	1%
Agriculture	18	4	22	1%
Total	1856	1583	3439	100%

Source: Elaboration on Miur data

As mentioned above, Rome is the city with the greatest number of Greek students (approximately 11%). The Roman universities, in fact,

are within a circuit of international mobility of students, specifically Greek students, with numbers significantly higher than the national average.

The Roman university scenario is almost similar to the national one. In effect, among the 380 Greek students enrolled at universities in Rome (Sapienza, TorVergata, Roma Tre University, Lumsa and the International Telematic University Uninettuno), most have chosen a path of study belonging to the hard sciences (about 80%).

The main faculties are Medicine and Surgery, Architecture, Engineering, Pharmacology and Mathematical, Physical and Natural Sciences. Among the humanities and socio-economic disciplines Literature and Philosophy, Law, Economics and Psychology stand out. The university with the greatest number of students from the Hellenic Republic is Sapienza with 83% of enrolments, followed by Tor Vergata (14%) and Roma Tre (2%). The remaining universities do not record a significant presence. Even in the case of Rome, there is an equal distribution according to gender, both in reference to the number of enrolments and to the preference of subjects.

Table 5. Greek students at the main universities of Rome (absolute values) – Academic year 2009-10

UNIVERSITY	M	F	TOT
Sapienza	153	161	314
Tor Vergata	28	25	53
Roma Tre	6	3	9
Uninettuno	3	0	3
Lumsa	1	0	1
Total	191	189	380

Source: Elaboration on Miur data

Table 6. Greek students at the main university faculties of Rome (a.v. and %) – Academic year 2009-10

FACULTY	M	F	TOT	%
Medicine and Surgery	90	79	169	44%
Architecture	32	35	67	18%
Engineering	23	8	31	8%
Pharmacology	9	20	29	8%
Mathematical, Physical and Natural Sciences	11	13	24	6%
Literature and Philosophy	7	14	21	6%
Law	7	4	11	3%
Economics	6	3	9	2%
Psychology	1	5	6	2%
Total	191	189	380	100%

Source: Elaboration on Miur data

A qualitative survey on Greek student mobility in Rome

2.1. Research aims, objectives and methodology

This survey arose from the need to understand the phenomenon of Greek student mobility in Italy, in light of the fact that scientific production on this topic is rather absent and fragmented. And yet we have seen, through the historical and generation reconstruction of Greek intellectual migration, how the presence of Greek students in Italian universities has always been significant and consistent, determining the general trend of the foreign students' presence in Italy.

Currently we have detailed information on the social composition of Greek students enrolled at Hellenistic universities, but not of those who study abroad. Without a doubt, the knowledge and dissemination of such information would be of great help in the study of the Greek population and very useful in understanding the reasons which prompted the students to leave their country, especially in this historical period characterised by an unprecedented economic crisis in Greece.

This research was conducted for the benefit of local and national universities, policy makers, university teachers and students, and public and private institutions of both countries, in order to identify the characteristics of the Greek human capital in the Italian universities. This has been done to improve decision making and to ensure equal opportunities for quality education, with particular attention to underrepresented groups. From this point of view, the analysis of the Greek

student mobility could be extremely useful in understanding better the issues, problems and dynamics of integration into the Italian universities and the social fabric in relation to the whole foreign student world.

In order to provide a more suitable framework to explain the phenomenon, the world of study was composed of the Greek students currently enrolled in undergraduate courses rather than those present for short-term study ("Erasmus", "Socrates", etc.). Also students with dual citizenship (Greek and Italian), but only those who had lived the experience of migration from Greece to Italy, were taken into consideration. Therefore students who were born and lived in Italy did not fall within the target.

The city of Rome was taken as a reference framework, since it has always been a historical destination for Greek students. Through the analysis of migratory paths and projects of the Greek students present in the Roman universities, social aspects, causes and motivations for choosing Italy as their destination for study have been investigated.

I analysed the training, expectations of study, evaluation of the university experience and facilities with all their problems and peculiarities, a long with job prospects by taking as a hypothesis the "Ulysses metaphor", in that it is possible to return to Greece by means of their cultural capital.

From a transnational perspective, I have also tried to understand the dynamics of inclusion into the Roman social fabric and the process of creation of their cultural identity and the ties with Greek networks that are factors of social identification and enhancement of their cultural heritage from transnational contexts.

The research was carried out via structured questionnaires and through the use of the collection of life stories. The use of these two research techniques has provided a key to a better understanding of the phenomenon. In fact, while on the one hand the questionnaire has provided information and data, on the other hand the life stories have allowed for a deeper penetration into the issues, for a direct access into the world of the students and to achieve a "vision from within" as a meaningful form of social knowledge.

The contact with the main Hellenic institutions in Rome, that allowed for the first access to the Greek student world, was the starting

point of the execution phase of research: the Greek Embassy with its Press Office and the "Hellenic Community of Rome and Lazio". In addition, the referents of the "World Council of Hellenes Abroad Europe" and "Cypriot Cultural Association in Italy", some academics, Greek restaurants and all the Hellenic community active in Italy and in Rome that revolve around the Web, have been involved as informants. Among these, the information portals on Greece were extremely useful and, above all, the many Greek student groups present on Facebook, starting with those of the "Greek Students of the University of Rome La Sapienza" and "KEFI (Centre of Greek students in Italy)". Through such "strategic points for sampling" around which persons of Greek nationality gravitate more or less constantly, the students belonging to the target have been contacted.

The snowball sampling method has been very useful. Thus, by adopting the saturation criterion, a «progressive construction of the sample» has been reached (Glaser, Strauss 1967) by creating many chains between the person interviewed and obtaining a diversification of the sampling units. Moreover, the identification of various informants has helped to reduce the time of the execution phase and has allowed for the removal of many obstacles in creating a climate of confidence, socialisation and mutual understanding.

I interviewed 100 students by questionnaire. Among these, 60 life stories were collected. The use of the questionnaire has been almost always face to face with only a small minority being sent via the web.

The interviews were conducted from March to December 2011 in many different places in the city of Rome. They were both formal and informal: from environments symbolically and practically more effective and "secure", such as the workplaces of the author and the students interviewed, the faculties attended by university students and their homes, up to more neutral and functional areas such as bars, restaurants and squares.

The language used was mostly Italian, well known by the students interviewed. Very seldom was the Greek language used. In such a case, the use of the mother tongue undoubtedly facilitated the interviews, allowing the interviewee the possibility to express themselves in a completely effective way and giving the proper meaning to their words.

In addition, wherever possible I have used the technique of direct overt observation, that the students were made aware of. These observations took place as a reference context within the universities, the workplaces and during recreational or cultural events. Such observation has allowed for gaining a greater understanding of students in their daily life and has created an environment of shared meanings that arises at the time of negotiation of meanings themselves.

2.2. Demographic and social data

The universe of the students interviewed is made up of 61 females and 39 males. Their age ranges from 18 to 37 years, with an average of 27 years. The average age of the males is slightly higher. The holders of Greek citizenship are 79, while those with dual citizenship are 21, with 20 Greek-Italian and 1 Greek-Albanian. Among students with dual nationality, 6 were born in Italy (Rome, Benevento, Castel Volturno and Lamezia Terme) and 1 in Albania. In all these cases, they had moved to Greece from infancy. Regarding marital status, except for two cases of students who married and had a child after their marriage in Italy, all students are unmarried.

As for the geographical area of origin, almost half of the students come from the region of Attica, a large number from Crete, followed by Central Macedonia and Southern Aegean Islands (Rhodes, Kos, Naxos). Unlike the very first stream of the Greek students in the 1950s, composed mostly of young people from rural areas of Greece, almost all students interviewed come from an urban environment represented by cities such as Athens, Heraklion, Chania, Thessaloniki, Veria.

The majority have their permanent legal residence in Greece. However, just under a fifth of the students have their permanent legal residence in Italy, mostly in Rome. Among these, there are not only students with dual citizenship, but also those who have been living in Italy with an average residence time of 11 years, who are more rooted in the capital and who have experienced a process of social inclusion of a longer duration.

From a socio-cultural perspective, the context of their family appears to be medium-high. In fact most parents attended a very high course of study, being in possession of university qualifications, undergraduate and sometimes post-graduate, or otherwise having acquired a high school diploma.

It is interesting that 20 students, almost all children of mixed couples, have at least one parent who has studied in Italy, mostly in the cities of Rome, Bologna and Naples. The cases where the father of Greek nationality met the Italian mother in the course of the university studies in Italy are very frequent. Medicine and Pharmacology were the main faculties that they attended.

Therefore a significant number of students has followed in the footsteps of their parents who came to study in Italy during the years1970-1980, the period when Greek was the second most spoken language in the Italian universities, in light of the very high Hellenic student presence.

From the point of view of the labour market, many students are children of professionals, many of them belonging to the medical profession, business (especially construction) and education (high school teacher and school principal). Other occupations are those included in public administration followed, to a lesser extent, by accommodation and catering (hotels and restaurants) activities as well as agricultural activities. A large number of students have housewives as mothers, often in possession of a high school diploma and not infrequently married to a doctor.

2.3. Reasons for migration project and coming to Italy

With reference to the survey question "Why did you come to Italy?", in addition to the obvious reasons closely related to the choice of study, the Greek students gave various answers. Consequently the scenario is quite varied and characterised by multiple and overlapping motivations. As in the past, the cultural affinity between the two countries and, thereafter, the geographical proximity remain the main reasons why students choose Italy as their destination of study.

Besides the reasons for study, I came for the geographical proximity. Otherwise the alternative choice was to go to America, but it was too far away. And then I came for cultural affinity. Because the Italians are Mediterranean people, closer to us than the Americans. (Student of Mathematical, Physical and Natural Sciences)

In addition to the reasons for study I came for cultural affinity. I liked the language, Italian culture and people because they are very close to our mentality. It was not difficult to adapt. I just wanted to come to Italy. (Student of Law)

In addition to study purposes, I came for cultural reasons because I liked the language. Then I wanted to change my life because, since my parents let me go abroad, I wanted to know other people, another mentality, another culture. And I liked Italy as a country. I knew English and German but I didn't want to go to England because in the end we are Mediterranean. I need sun! I had to choose Spain or Italy and in the end I came here, because it is closer. (Student of Architecture)

In addition to study, I came for cultural affinity and geographical proximity. We Greeks choose Italy for the language, that is easier in Europe after English. We don't study medicine in England. In Italy the Greeks come to study medicine. In England we can't enter medicine immediately. We can go for biology, for three-four years, and then sign up for medicine. But in England there's also bad weather! Then Italy is Mediterranean, the weather is nice, it's close to Greece, it's a traditional destination for students. We feel at home! Greek students come here first because they failed to enter Greek universities. They couldn't get in there, so they are forced to leave. Our first stop is Italy, especially for scientific disciplines such as medicine, pharmacology and biology. Otherwise we go to England for economics and engineering. Some romantics came to Rome and Florence to study architecture... In the 90s it was said "Where will we go? To Italy". It was the obvious choice, I had known this since I was 14. You didn't need much organisation because, when you came here, there were many Greeks and you found friends immediately. It was a Greek cultural phenomenon. (Student of Medicine)

As explained by this last student, it is a geo-cultural proximity that has been internalised for decades in the history of the Hellenic student mobility. It has strengthened, not only from a quantitative point of view, the sequence of the constant and massive flow of students leaving the Greek cities and towns and pouring into the Italian ones. However it has also been due to a dense series of narrative plots that have

contributed over time to building and rebuilding some collective imagination, both socially and culturally shared. Italy, although to a lesser extent than in the past, continues to be a destination of fascination for many young Greek students due to its artistic heritage, climatic conditions and the long tradition of cultural relations between the two countries in light of the classical heritage from the ancient Greek-Roman period. Moreover, the desire to learn or improve on the Italian language, considered more attractive and accessible compared to other European languages, plays a key role. Also the perception of a common and presumed "Mediterranean identity" and sense of belonging to a "Mediterranean civilisation", summarised in the emblematic and widespread expression in Greece "one face, one race[2]", connotes that Italy is preferred to other European countries like Great Britain, Germany, France, Spain and overseas such as the USA and Australia. It must be said, however, that it is mainly the city of Rome that makes a difference. In the guise of Capital and cosmopolitan centre, unique for its artistic and cultural treasures, Rome is privileged compared to other European cities because it is nearer to Greece and because, in comparison to other Italian cities, it has a more strategic position in terms of favourable and widespread flights connecting with the Greek cities.

I came here because, for those coming to study architecture, there are al-

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2 The expression "one face, one race" (the Greek version of "mia fàtsa, mia ràtsa"), denotes not so much a somatic similarity but rather a cultural affinity between Greeks and Italians. Spread through Greece during the Italian occupation of the Dodecanese islands (1912-1943) and then throughout the rest of Greece, this expression presupposed the commonality and the sharing of ideas and values about marriage, family, sense of honour, cultural tastes, the love for music and song, and romance. As explained by Doumanis, «the occupied Greeks expressed their appreciation for the Italians compared with other foreign occupiers: Turks, Germans and the English. The occupied Greeks in fact attributed the nature of the occupation to the national "character" of occupiers and what distinguished the Italians, from the other occupiers, was the "familiarity", a characteristic that the islanders greatly appreciated. Friendships and marriages could reduce the differences between rulers and ruled and produced the popular impression that the Greeks and Italians were "one face, one race» (Doumanis 2003, pp. 202-203 and 234-235).

ways reasons of cultural interest: Rome is full of beautiful buildings and mu-
seums. I'm always a tourist. Always, free! I preferred to come here. I
liked the idea of coming to Rome, because it's a beautiful city, full of old and
new things. There is everything. Then Rome has many universities: Sapienza,
Tor Vergata, Roma Tre. (Student of Architecture)

Also the Italian origin of their family, obviously for the children of
mixed couples, appears as a significant motivation, as well as, albeit to
a lesser extent, the presence of family and friends in Italy.

I came to Italy in 1999 when I was 18. Here I only had my grandmother. I
came for my Italian origins because if they were English I would have gone
to England. My parents said "Since you have a relative in Italy, you go to
study in Italy where we have also studied". (Student of Letters and Philoso-
phy)

I could have chosen to go anywhere but my sister was here. She could
choose but I couldn't go anywhere else. And so, from all the countries where
it was easier to enter university, I chose Italy. (Student of Pharmacology)

These reasons can be explained using the network theory. This the-
ory belongs to an intermediate theoretical level and is very effective in
explaining the causes of migration processes, placing itself between
the macro theories (or structuralist) and micro theories (or individual-
istic). As Ambrosini states, the migration network theory creates «a
theoretical intermediate way between the opposing hyper-socialising
and hypo-socialising conceptions about migration, in which actors are
considered, respectively, passive, constrained by structural forces, or
individuals acting based on their preferences and desires» (Ambrosini
2008, p. 18). In fact, the individual decisions of the students inter-
viewed fit within larger processes where the previous migratory ex-
perience of family members and relatives, and the presence of migra-
tory chains, working as agents of support and information, seem to be
no less important than rational calculations and macro factors in ex-
plaining the motivations of their arrival in Italy.

The reasons for searching for a job, the decision of their parents
and the choice to follow or reach their partners are of lesser impor-
tance. Finally, in the category "other" the response tied to the desire to
have an experience abroad shows some relevance. We are often faced

with experience and knowledge projects dictated by a strong sense of restlessness that denotes the desire to know new places, to satisfy these aspirations, to mix the need for training with a need for existential and cultural growth. Compared to the previous Hellenic generations of students, the surveyed students have a greater ease in adapting to life in Italy. Furthermore the interviewed students are more accustomed to thinking globally and having experiences abroad due to the presence of student exchange programs that stimulate mobility (Erasmus, Socrates, etc.) and to the benefits of globalisation (reduction of space and time, technological progress, etc.). Furthermore, the need to exit from their family "shell", in order to start a real "weaning process" and obtaining tools necessary to build up their autonomy, leads many young people to leave their homes and reach another country.

> In addition to study, I came for life reasons. After the exams to enter university in Greece I said to my mother, "I'll pack my bags and leave. I want to change country". To see the world, discover myself. I had a reason but I'm still discovering it. I wanted to have experiences, because I had never had them and the family has the potential to become destructive to a young daughter. And I chose Rome because Rome is Rome, it has a name... And then we knew, through my mother, that Sapienza University has a great name. And we chose the Sapienza. And Rome is a beautiful city. For me, Italy was Rome. I knew nothing else. I only knew Mina and Albano, because my parents had records by these singers. (Student of Pharmacology)

The arrival time of the interviewed students has been from 1994 to 2011. Most said that they had arrived in Italy over the past decade, especially in the period 2006-2011.

Very few people said that they had already been to Italy in the past, in a period prior to the decision to undertake their studies. The experience of "anticipatory socialisation", which allowed the acquisition of information, values, orientations of the host society, is closely linked to summer holidays with their families and concerns mainly students with Italian origin who came to visit their relatives or friends.

Although a large proportion of the interviewees made the journey to Italy alone, some stories report group experiences, often through study trips organised by the Greek private schools where they learned

the Italian language.

None had other study experiences abroad before coming to Italy and the very first destination was the city of Rome. Indeed, only a very narrow minority went to other central-northern Italian cities before coming to the capital. In this case, the main reasons were the learning of the Italian language through a course at the "Università per Stranieri[3]" (University for Foreigners) in Siena and Perugia, and the enrolment in a first cycle of university studies interrupted and then abandoned (Udine and L'Aquila).

More than two-thirds of the students who had just arrived in Rome knew one or more persons. We are in the presence of important and well-established migration chains that have certainly facilitated the process of inclusion in the capital and that have represented valuable "access channels". In addition, they have undoubtedly triggered feedback effects in the country of origin by helping to perpetuate and reproduce the dynamics and expectations related to the experience of mobility. Most of them were affective networks of Greek nationality already present in Italy that "set the pace" for their migratory path. To a lesser extent, they were friends or acquaintances of Italian nationality. The forms of assistance have materialised mainly in practical actions such as hospitality at their home, finding a room for rent, valuable advice pertinent to the studies and bureaucratic procedures, the creation of networks of interpersonal relationships, and language support. Obviously all of these bridge actions have depended on the type and degree of acquaintance. Family members and relatives (uncles, brothers and sisters, cousins and grandparents) were, for example, extremely useful in helping with initial accommodation, especially for students with dual nationality. On the other hand the friends, both Greek and Italian, were very effective as guides within the universities and in orchestrating social relationships.

> I came to Rome in 2000. When I arrived I already knew an Italian family because they were friends we had met on holiday in Thassos when I was 8. From then on, this friendship has gone on and, when I decided to come here to Rome, they helped me a lot in finding a house and getting used to Italy.

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3 The "Università per Stranieri" are State universities specialising in the teaching and dissemination of the Italian language, literature and culture.

They were close friends. (Student of Pharmacology)

> I arrived in Rome in 2008 where I already knew my cousin. He is Greek-Italian and he helped me when I didn't speak Italian well by giving me some more information. I had also contacted other guys on the internet who were here and they gave me a lot of information. Later I met many other Italian and Greek people. (Student of Architecture)

For the majority of people interviewed, the first contact with Rome was positive in the sense that particular psychological, social and cultural problems did not occur. However, for a small minority, the process of social integration was more difficult. From some life stories, in fact, cases of anxiety, depression, a sense of loss, loneliness, insecurity and all those feelings related to the so-called "acculturative stress" emerged. That being, the kind of stress that occurs during the acculturation process (Berry 2006).

Some students reported that, in the first phase of their stay in Rome, they felt a strong sense of loss and insecurity that prevented them from carrying out any daily activity as: going out for a simple stroll, going shopping in a supermarket, getting on a bus, going to a university class or asking for information in Italian from a passer-by. The first experience abroad alone, the loss of significant social relationships, the lack of cultural codes of belonging and language barriers have triggered the need to meet only persons of the same nationality with the effect of creating ghettoisation and idealisation of the country of origin. However, due to a prolonged stay in Rome, such uncertainty, loneliness, homesickness and defensiveness has faded. They have finally reached a certain psychological balance, the need to find spaces of sociality, the production of new meanings and new operational strategies have surfaced, and a new process of self-recognition in the new cultural contexts of reference has started.

> In the beginning, when I was 19, I didn't like anything here: a language that wasn't yours, there wasn't the central square of my village with my friends, I turned on the TV and I didn't see anyone I knew. All this did not help me. Even at the university, during the first years, I didn't have a good friendly rapport with the Italians, a rapport that could help me. I didn't know which subject to take first, what to ask. I walked into the huge lecture rooms to take a seat and no one said a word to me. Perhaps we were also a bit

closed. It lasted a few years. Then something clicked, not only for me but also for many other Greeks. I had difficulty even sleeping at night. I stayed up till two or three in the morning because this depression didn't help me. Then every morning me and my Greek friends would wake up late and not want to go to university anymore, to fight to improve. Time passed quickly and we couldn't get anything done. This Italian way of tackling the exams in front of the teacher was crazy for us. We couldn't do it. There was the fear of going there and taking the examination. We couldn't make the effort to study, understand things and memorise a foreign language. In a whole year we took only one exam. Then there was the pressure by parents and we had also to tell some lies. My experience has been difficult. (Student of Economics)

In the beginning, when I arrived here, I had only Greek friends. The change of a country and a culture always drives you to seek other Greek students like you, in order to move forward, to communicate. Otherwise you can't do it. I felt more "Greek" but not in the sense of nationalism. When you move away from your city and you leave home, family, acquaintances and friends, it's always a bit hard to get used to it right away. The first years were a bit strange in that many Italian habits were a bit different from Greek ones. Small differences. But you took a little time to get accustomed to Rome. For example, it's a big city. It's not like Heraklion. Then, when you learn to speak Italian better, to better organise yourself, you start to adapt. (Student of Medicine)

2.4. Educational background: Greek education system and the problem of *panellinies*

From the end of the military regime to the present, Greece has experienced a long and complex process of change in the education system brought about through numerous reforms that have occurred over the decades from the Karamanlis and Rallis reform in 1975 that had the merit of introducing the modern Greek language (Dimotiki) into the schools and revising curricula, to the Diamantopoulou current reform that aims, through a series of measures, to renew the higher education system following the European directives of the Bologna Process.

Box 1. Main reforms and laws of the Greek higher education system

Law 3374/2005
- Establishment of Hellenic Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (HQAA).
- Mandatory application of a credit system fully compatible with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), for all graduate and post-graduate programs.
- Issue of a Diploma Supplement, based on the model developed by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES.

Law 3328/2005
- Establishment of a new agency for the recognition of degrees (DOATAP) in order to simplify the procedures for the recognition of degrees.

Law 3404/2005
- Possibility for universities to confer double, multiple and joint degrees.
- Use of a different language from Greek in post-graduate programs for enhancing the mobility of students and academic staff and the cooperation between European and Greek higher education institutions.

Law 3369/2005
- Definition of the organisation for Lifelong learning.

Law 3391/2005
- Establishment of the "International Hellenic University" with the aim of encouraging student mobility.

Law 3549/2007
- Renovation of the structure and operational framework of the national higher education institutes by expanding their autonomy and responsibilities.
- Creation of new institutions of higher education and increase in the number of admitted students.

Diamantopoulou current reform
- Strengthening of the cooperation and internationalisation in education.
- Development of Lifelong Learning;
- Creation of an independent authority ("Hellenic Higher Education Authority").
- Unification of the small structures and creation of a binary system.
- Reorganisation of secondary education and, specifically, high school.
- Change of the access system to higher education.
- Harmonisation of the Greek education system with other systems of the European Union countries.
- Application of the compulsory registration of students each semester in order to

eliminate the phenomenon of "eternal students".
- Introduction of part-time for working students.
- Loans for all students, not just for post-graduate students
- Deletion of "university asylum[4]".

To understand more effectively the data and the situation of the interviewed students, we should briefly describe the system of secondary and higher education in Greece.

The Greek secondary education system is divided into *Gymnasio* (Middle or Junior High School) and *Lykeio* (an academically-oriented High School), each with a duration of three years. The *Genikò Lykeio* (General High School) is the most common high school whose curriculum includes subjects of general knowledge (language and literature, ancient and modern Greek, history, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, religion, foreign languages, technology, social sciences and physical education). From the second year the students must choose one of three fields of study (theoretical, scientific or technological) characterised by specific programs that provide preparation for entrance exams to universities.

Access to the higher education system is possible only after acquiring the *Apolytirio Lykeiou* (higher school diploma) based on a scale from 9.5 to 20, and the *Veveosi* (Certificate) which includes the grades obtained at the national level, both for the general subjects and for those of the field of study.

The overall score takes into account the grade of the Certificate of the last year of high school, the assessment of the school level and the

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4 In Greece, since the end of military rule, police had been prohibited from entering the university buildings except in cases of rape, murder and other serious crimes. The conquest of the university asylum is due primarily to a tragic event that happened on the 17th November, 1973, the day when the tanks stormed the Athens Polytechnic to suppress the student protests. Since that event, the right to asylum in universities had always been one of the inviolable tenets enacted after the military dictatorship, during the transition to democracy (*Metapoliteusis*). However the Greek government has justified the abolition of this right because of its abuse. For example the occupation of the Athens University Law building by some immigrants in January 2011.

exam marks for general admission (*panellinies*), that are held at the end of the last year at the national level and are for the six subjects of the course chosen by the student. For some disciplines, as well as the exams for general admission, there are additional specific tests, such as freehand drawing for architecture courses, language tests for foreign language courses or a test of musical knowledge in the music disciplines. For candidates who participate in *panellinies*, it is necessary to a total score of at least half of the maximum score in relation to the chosen faculty or department.

Besides acquiring the *Apolytirio Lykeiou* and *Veveosi*, admission to the higher education system depends on the number of available places (*numerus clausus*) — set annually by the Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs — in relation to the department to which they want to be admitted, and the list of preference of the departments. If the candidates are accepted by more than one department, only the first preference on the list is considered and they can not be admitted to the departments not specifically mentioned on the list. Finally, in addition to the number of places available, a certain number of students belonging to the so-called "special groups" (students of Greek citizens living abroad, foreign students or those with Greek origin, scholarship winners, Muslim citizens from Thrace, students with serious health problems, etc.) can be admitted.

According to Law 3549/2007, the higher education system is organised into the binary model that consists of, next to the university sector (universities, polytechnics, academies, "the Hellenic Open University" and "International Hellenic University") other non-university higher education institutions (Technological Education Institutes/TEI and the School of Pedagogical and Technological Education). These sectors correspond to the levels 5-6 of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED).

Universities are autonomous institutions placed under the supervision of the competent ministry and are structured in faculties or schools (*Scholes*) which in turn are divided into departments (*Tmimata*). The departments, divided into sections, represent the basic functional units of the academic system.

University studies are divided into three cycles. The first cycle consists of the degree course with a duration of four years and covers a

large part of university courses. An exception is engineering and other applied sciences (five years) and medicine (six years). At the end of the path you received the degree (*Ptyxío*). The second cycle is represented by a post-graduate course, which lasts one or two years, culminating in the awarding of a diploma. This intermediate phase provides access to the third cycle, that is Ph.D., covering a period from three to six years.

Figure 3. Greek educational system
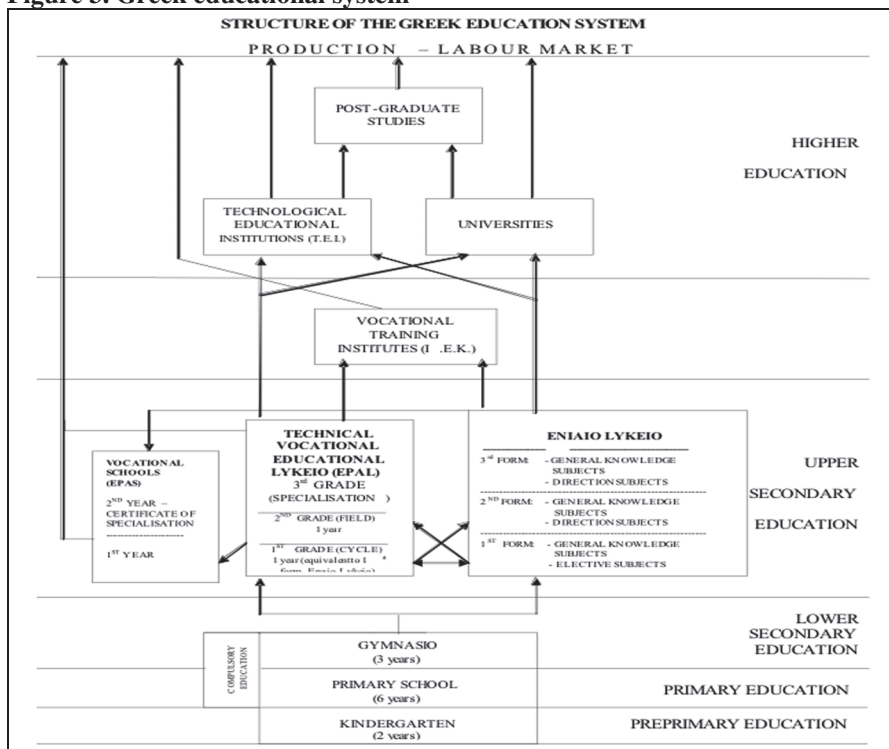
The key principles of the Greek educational system are contained in the Constitution of 1975, later reformed in 1986 and 2001. According to article 16, education must be public and free to all levels and private universities are not allowed to be established. In fact, with the

exception of some universities such as the "Hellenic Open University" and "International Hellenic University", and some post-graduate courses of study, there are no admission or tuition fees within the educational system. The textbooks are provided free of charge and there are forms of support and scholarships for lower-income or large families. In some cases financial support also extends to food, housing and transport.

With regard to private universities, notwithstanding Article 16 of the Constitution and after the laws 3606/2008 and 3848/2010, the opportunity to collaborate with foreign universities in order to offer undergraduate and post-graduate training in Greece is acceptable. These are mainly private institutions acting as "franchises" of European and American universities, such as the "State University of New York", but also non-profit institutions accredited or wholly owned and managed by foreign universities, such as the "University of Indianapolis-Athens Campus". The monitoring of such agreements, as well as additional provisions for the functioning of colleges, is conducted by the Ministry of Education but also by education authorities of the countries involved. In addition, due to the integration of the European Directive 2005/36 on mutual recognition of qualifications, the holders of academic qualifications acquired in EU universities, including some private universities in Greece, have achieved full professional rights.

Over the last twenty years we have witnessed a great expansion of the Greek university system which has mostly concerned the number of students, the enlargement of scientific fields, an increase in the presence of institutes at the peripheral level, an increase in the number of departments and in the offer of post-graduate programs of study.

Greece has seen a dramatic increase in the number of students who complete secondary education and in the enrolment rates in higher education. As we have seen, the actual number of seats actually allowed (*numerus clausus*), and the departments to which they are admitted is determined by the Ministry of Education every year. This means that the number of new entries to the system is determined not by the real demand of the students but by the ministerial decision.

The enrolment rates have increased sharply from late 1990 to early 2000, but then levelled off in the last period. Currently, the highest percentage of enrolment in the higher education system is in TEI. In

effect, the rate of increase was slightly higher than the university sector in the period 2005-2009, thus reducing the differences between the two sectors.

In the academic year 2011-12, the Ministry of Education reduced the number of students admitted to higher education through a cut of 10.250 places, going from 84.690 in 2010-11 to 74.440 in the next academic year. Most of the cuts have been in the TEI, in light of the difference between the number of places and the number of students actually and actively enrolled, according to the number of students who asked for free textbooks. This reduction was made and justified by the Ministry to reflect the realistic estimate of student demand and to maintain the same level of the number of students in universities and TEI.

In Greece, since 1964 the system of access to secondary and higher education has been amended several times. The students interviewed have gone through a very structured process of reforms, in particular from 1995 to 2010, during which they attended and finished high school before trying to enter university. The main changes concerned the change in the number of fields of study (up to 1998 the fields, called *desmes*, were four and were chosen at the beginning of the last year of high school), the number of subjects to take at the examinations for the access to university, the structure of examinations and the importance given to the oral mark and the high school diploma. The only thing that has not changed has been the exclusion of a large number of those who want to enter the higher education system.

If you do not pass the *panellinies* you have three options. The first is to attempt the examinations the following year. The second to accept the department and the city to which you have been admitted. The last is to take the road toward universities abroad.

Having said this, the majority of students who were interviewed had attended the public general high school in Greece. However, some did their secondary education studies at a private school. In this case, it was both Greek and foreign (Italian, French, American) high schools, all falling under the mandate of the Ministry exercising a power of control over them. The students said that this choice was determined mostly by their parents, who found in private institutions all the appropriate features for an ideal system of study.

Some students come from the Italian School of Athens. Many of them attended the Italian section, while a minority attended the Greek section. Under the control of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Italian section of the school is a public high school with a four year system entirely consistent with the Italian school system and it is the only school in Greece with an Italian secondary school curriculum. Those who attended the Italian section, are students with dual nationality who often began their education from elementary school due to the decision of the Italian parent, to maintain tight cultural ties with the country of origin.

A successful performance at school are common to a large part of the students interviewed. Suffice to say that, according to the Greek evaluation system characterised by a scale from 0 to 20, more than half of the students who attended the public general high school obtained a mark (*vatmos apolytiriou*) over 17 out of 20. The same holds true for students coming from the Italian section of the Italian School of Athens (with an average of 82/100) or from foreign private schools.

Excluding most of the students from the Italian School of Athens and other foreign private schools, each person interviewed had attempted the university entrance examination in Greece once or twice, without achieving the results hoped for. The few students of the Italian School of Athens, with the exception of a few motivated more by curiosity than real intentions, chose not to take the exams, because they already intended to continue their studies in Italy or to avoid the long-term stressful preparation for exams.

In fact the *panellinies* are characterised by a high level of difficulty and competition. Capable of immobilising the entire country, the entrance examinations to higher education have a strong resonance in the headlines and all the Greek mass media, representing each year an enormous source of individual and family stress. The high competition for university entrance generates a peculiarity that characterises Greek society. Consequently, the students are induced to take a preparatory course of studies, parallel to the school through private lessons at home or at private schools, called *frontistiria*, that are cropping up all over the Greek territory more and more. All the students interviewed had studied privately for their examination, investing a lot of energy and money. Just think, as observed by Psacharopoulos (2003.a, p.

129), that each year more than one billion euros is spent by families for the preparation of entrance exams, more than what the Greek State spends on secondary schools.

> The school system should work better than it does now. But the competition is so great that you have to begin to prepare yourself early. I had to start from the second year of high school, studying for two full years, to get into medicine because the competition was very high. But Greece is a country with 10 million inhabitants, with limited economic opportunities. Therefore it's unable to support the university organisation as they can in Italy. For example, at the Sapienza University there are 600 places for medicine and in all of Italy there are thousands. If in Greece there are 1200 places for 10-20 thousand people. This means that the competition is higher. This has led to the presence of *frontistiria*. You attend *frontistiria* to go forward. It is a custom. I have tried to pass the admission exams for medicine twice but I haven't been able to. There were 4 subjects: chemistry, physics, biology and a free composition. The exams in physics, chemistry and biology were difficult. They took three hours. The first time didn't go well and then, while studying Italian, I tried again. It didn't go well and I came to Italy. I would have liked to stay to study in my city but there are very few universities where you can study medicine in comparison to Italy. They are in Athens, Thessaloniki, Larisa, Ioannina, Patras and Heraklion. They are six. My first preference was Heraklion, but I would have gone anywhere. The Heraklion university is very important, it's known abroad. (Student of Medicine)

> I did *panellinies* to enter pharmacology. As the first choice I had written to Athens, Thessaloniki and then Patras, but I didn't care so much where to go. In Greece everyone goes to *frontistirio* because university places are few. There is high competition and every student wants to be better than the others. The period of *panellinies* is hard. It's a trauma. Because you're a teenager, because you begin to prepare for the exams at the beginning of the summer, you don't live that age you should live. Everyone goes to *frontistirio*, even people who can't afford it. The cost depends on whether you do lessons with the teacher at home or go directly to the *frontistirio*: a *frontistirio* can cost 2500 euros per year, at home even 9000 euros. My brother did all the private lessons at home, while I went to *frontistirio*, and he spent three times more than me. It's a business because people coming out of a faculty of mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology aren't able to go to work for the State, for a public school, because they didn't pass the exams that are very difficult, and so they go to work in a *frontistirio*.(Student of Pharmacology)

The choice of field of study is often made in relation to professional

opportunities and the level of employment in the labour market. This explains the preference of departments such as engineering, architecture, medicine, economics, law and pedagogy. In reference to the students interviewed, almost all the demands have concerned departments of the desirable universities of Athens characterised by a threshold of a very high minimum score. Even though they obtained high scores for the admission examination, some of which were between 18 and 20, the students were unable to reach the required minimum grade and they were admitted to departments listed among the last ones in their list of preference, going to study something that they did not really want, often in cities far away from their place of residence. This is one of the reasons for the existence of so-called "eternal students" or, as Psacharopoulos defines them, "unsatisfied successful candidates" (Psacharapoulos 2003.b, p. 65). In fact, it has been noted that the students admitted to departments listed at the bottom on the list of preferences have a great difficulty finishing their studies. For example, among the interviewed students there is one who had been admitted to the department of molecular biology in Alexandroupouli, hundreds of kilometres from his city, having given the department of medicine in Heraklion (Crete) as first preference. Or there are those who passed the minimum requirement to study computer science and telecommunications with the firm intention and expectation of becoming a doctor.

> If many Greek students here enrol in medicine and pharmacology, it is because there is no other possibility than to study abroad. It's too difficult to enter in Greece. In Greece your entry into a university is based on getting the top maximum examination result. Each university has a minimum pass rate. If you rise above it you enter. The optimum is 20. Medicine in Alexandroupoli had a minimum of 18,8, 19,3 in Thessaloniki, 19,4 in Athens. Other cities were Patras, Ioannina and Crete. I wanted to go anywhere. But I got 18,5 and I couldn't go anywhere. It was 2003. I was very close to entering. So I was pissed off and I said "Why? Fuck off! I won't take the exams again!". I could only enrol in pharmacology, biology or physics. In my opinion many students who are enrolled in biology or pharmacology are those who haven't entered medicine. I decided to enrol in the faculty of physics, but after a while I realised that I didn't like it. Then I said to my father, "I'll do five years in physics, I'll take my degree and then I'll try the entrance exam again for medicine and enter the third year". My father said to me "Listen to me,

you are now 18 years old, you'll have 5 years of physics that will become 6, and you'll finish your studies when you'll be 24. And will you decide to take the entrance exam to study medicine at 24? You will finish when you're 30! Should I pay for 12 years of study?". So I said "Well then, I'll go abroad". (Student of Medicine)

I did some private lessons at home to prepare for *panellinies*, because the school wasn't enough. Even if it should have been, because it was a private school! It's a school problem but I think it's also a question of mentality. It's a bit like a dog chasing its tail because teachers don't care as they know that students do private lessons at home or *frontistirio*. Sure, there are some faculties where you can enter with a low mark, as German philology, where there is not much demand, because places are created based on demand. If you are only 10 students who want to enter, all would enter. I tried the *panellinies* to enter medicine but it didn't go well. I wanted to study in Athens, Thessaloniki and then Patras. I thought I had entered based on the marks of the years before, but just for a few points I was out. I thought I would have entered the Crete or Alexandroupouli universities. I was sure. And I didn't want to try again. I entered computer science and telecommunications. I went there for one year but they were not for me. I had written these preferences at the end of the list at random, because I was certain of entering medicine. (Student of Medicine)

According to Law 1268/1982, students are allowed to repeat the tests as many times as they want during various semesters. This has resulted in a high percentage of out-of-course students who benefit from the flexibility of the system. In addition the law did not provide for the deregistration of students because it stated that «the status of student is acquired through the enrolment at an institution of higher education and it is lost with the release of the degree» (Art. 29, para.1).

Since there was essentially no incentive for students to complete the cycle of studies or to establish limit on the requirements, thousand of students are technically "registered" but they are not really active, creating problems for universities and depriving them of any capacity planning.

In order to overcome this problem, the criterion used to reduce the number has been to count the number of students who have signed up to receive free textbooks. Moreover, with the introduction of Law 3549/2007, in order to solve the problem of "eternal students", the

Ministry tried to regulate the duration of studies through the minimum number of semesters required for the acquisition of a degree.

Obviously this is a problem related to those who decide to remain to study in Greece and who often choose very sought after departments, around which there is a process of very high competition, such as medicine, architecture and engineering. To not get caught in the throes of the phenomenon of "eternal student" and studying subjects not related to their interest, the students interviewed have instead chosen a way of escape in order to satisfy their expectations of study.

All their stories are full of traumatic memories related to the period of preparation and realisation of examinations. A critical feeling of complaint against the Greek higher education system prevails, with all the dynamics and problems attached. This attitude is certainly understandable and justified by the sense of frustration generated by the exclusion from the Greek education system. As already mentioned, in relation to the period of preparation for exams, there is no student who has not attended a *frontistirio* or has not done private lessons at home. All describe this period as a total experience that absorbed them completely. Generally *frontistirio* is considered as a private extra-school education system that fills the gaps of high school, not only public but also private.

> I did *panellinies*. I tried only once. I didn't want to restudy everything for another year. During the preparation I drank 5 different types of drinks, to stay awake and for memory, vitamins. I put on 130 kilos... (Student of Engineering)

> In 2009 I tried to enter architecture but I couldn't. I did the preparation exam at the *frontistirio*, I started during the last year of *gymnasio*. We studied a lot. Every afternoon. It is not only people who have the money that go to the *frontistiria*. Everyone has to do it because the teachers don't teach at school a lot because they know that the students don't pay much attention as in the afternoon they go to the *frontistiria*. It's absurd! No one can enter university by studying only at school. From morning until evening you have to study. Getting in faculties like architecture, medicine and engineering is very difficult. Certainly, in some universities and faculties, such as philosophy or sociology, it is easier to get in. But you have to see what they offer... Here in Italy it works that you choose the faculty and take the exam after you have chosen. Instead in Greece first you take the exam and then you see if you can

enter the faculty. (Student of Architecture)

This parallel system is in conflict with one of the cardinal principles of the Greek Constitution, namely that education must be public and free. Of course this is not a compulsory education, in the sense that each student is free to decide whether to do so or not. But, as recounted by the interviewees, the high competition for university entrance "forces" them to not rely solely on the public school. Increasingly, in fact, the *frontistirio* is internalised as part of a student's school career, which they can not do without and which creates or strengthens a certain social and cultural status. Many students complain about these peculiarities of the Greek educational system but paradoxically they contribute in keeping them alive with the complicity of their families that, just to see their children in a Greek university, are willing to make huge and especially economic sacrifices. Some students are aware that all the money invested in private studies could be used in a different manner such as to improve the quality of public secondary education. Others complain about the too rote and notional teaching method of *frontistiria*, that they define as *papagalia*, that being that is not so much aimed at increasing the level of education, but rather at obtaining a mark sufficient for university entrance. However it should be added that some students recognise in *frontistiria* the credit of having raised their level of preparation, both for the *panellinies* and for the entrance test to get into Italian universities.

During the past few years of school, everybody is studying for *panellinies*. It means that you go to school and do nothing because you have to do private lessons. So you go to school and relax. Even the teachers say "Today you are studying too much, so we'll take it easy". So last year I got very low marks, for example 13 in ancient Greek and Latin. Basically we did no lessons at school. So we focused much more on the *frontistirio* subjects. Everybody starts the preparation for *panellinies* three years before, which is a frightening thing. During the last year of school, I virtually didn't see my friends anymore because they were always studying. And then, the teachers didn't explain. They said "If they ask this, you must respond with paragraph 2 of page 3". They told us how to write a good answer to pass an exam. It's unbelievable. I'm sure that people who took an exam, for example, in history at that time, are now thick as a brick about history! It was a scam. I hate the Greek school and I think many things need to be reviewed. In Italy you learn

much more. In Greece there's no culture! They must be more rigorous because we are talking about Greece! (Student of Letters and Philosophy)

The public school is not able to prepare students for university. It's one thing I hate! I studied for two years at the *frontistirio*. I started in the summer before the second year of high school. It was very long and tiring. I had so much anxiety that when I finished I was destroyed. It is a sacrifice that parents make because it is the only way to enter the university. You only become a parrot who learns things that then you will forget. There is no depth in what you learn. It's almost like a driving test because they teach you only how to answer exam questions. It's a system that doesn't form you, that just gets you used to learning things by heart with a little mental flexibility. It's always been like that, ever since my father was studying. The school teachers, in part, are victims of this system. Many of us didn't go to school to study because there was no time. But there were also students who took advantage of it because they knew that, at the same time, they went to the *frontistirio* and so they didn't do their best at school. Everyone went to the *frontistirio*. (Student in Communication Studies)

In Greece the State provides the public schools and universities. But then there is another "State" made up of payments, which is the *frontistirio*. At school the teachers didn't teach because they knew that, coming back home, there was the *frontistirio* that explained everything to us. It is not right but it works 1000%. I studied for 5 years at the *frontistirio*. Everyone does it. You go directly to private schools or to public schools and then to the *frontistirio*. There are also those who go to private schools and then to the *frontistirio*. But the level of preparation is higher than the Italian one. In fact, there is no Greek student here who doesn't pass the entrance exams. (Student in Medicine)

This critical attitude is especially evident in respect to admission to the university system and covers the following major issues, some of which are listed above: the question of the *numerus clausus* and the very high threshold for some departments (medicine, architecture and engineering), the structuring of the testing that forces them to undertake exams in subjects not very pertinent to the path of studies that they wish to do (for example, the biology exam for civil engineering, or mathematics for medicine), the waiting for an entire year before attempting the tests again, the limit of available places and cities that host universities. In addition they criticise the precocity of the choice of the university studies since high school with the indication of the

field and the risk of ending up in a department indicated as a last option in the list of preference. Further criticisms have to do with the widespread politicisation of the universities due to the presence of student factions (*parataxeis*) that are directly related to political parties, with the opening of the Greek government to a possible recognition of private universities and with no recognition of the Italian undergraduate degree from the Interdisciplinary Organization for the Recognition of degrees and Information (DOATAP). Consequently, with few exceptions, the Greek government does not recognise university bachelors gained abroad. This means that many students who have obtained a university degree in Italy or in another country are forced to attend a master's degree, which lasts for one or two years, so as to obtain a degree equivalent to a four year degree awarded by a Greek higher education institution.

> All the system is absurd. It's not a very good thing. It would be great if the *panellinies* were eliminated. I have many friends who didn't do their best at the *panellinies*, because that day they were scared or sick or they were stressed because they were gambling their future in one day... And you risk entering a department that you don't really want. A friend of mine went with her second choice, and after she left university. So you are forced to study something that you are not interested in, to do a job you dislike. The students at high school are not convinced that they know what they want to do in the future. Here in Italy you register for architecture and, if after one year, you realise that is not for you, you can change. In my opinion, this is a fair thing. (Student of Architecture)

> The *panellinies* are a big shit. Here in Italy, if I want to go into civil engineering, I take a math test. In Greece if you want to enter civil engineering you have to pass tests that have nothing to do with it. If you want to study economics you need to take tests such as physics, mathematics, management and statistics. What does physics have to do with economics? (Student of Engineering)

Despite the widespread pessimism due to the full awareness of the limits of the Greek education system, there are many proactive students who hope for future changes and improvements. First of all, and in full accordance with the current reform by the ex-Education minis-

ter Diamantopoulou, is the modification of the system of access to higher education through the allocation of responsibilities directly to the university departments concerning the selection and number of the admitted students. In fact, after coming into contact with the Italian university system, the students recognise the need and usefulness of a process of harmonisation with the other European Union countries through the implementation of the principles of the Bologna Process and Lisbon Strategy. They look favourably at the elimination of *panellinies* and the introduction of a selective entry test related solely to the chosen faculty. In addition, they stress the importance of the recognition of academic qualifications and the new organisation of the credit system (180 credits that correspond to 60 credits per year).

> I think that it's a little difficult to create a university system similar to that of European countries, with 3+2, because many courses in Greece last 4 years. But with good will you can achieve anything. Let's see... I think they should give one more chance to enter or create an "open number" and then make the studies more difficult within the university. Letting people try and then making examinations more difficult makes more sense. It makes no sense having to prepare for one year, staying indoors, destroying your life, and then finding everything easy in the university. They should do like here in Italy: there's a closed number but there are many universities. Here you take tests in relation to the faculty that you want. Instead in Greece there are the same exams for those who want to study architecture, medicine and engineering... Why does someone who wants to study medicine have to take an exam in maths? And why does someone who wants to study civil engineering have to take, as a main test, a biology exam? It makes no sense. It's an unjust system! Once there were 4 *desmes*, and if you didn't pass the exams you could keep the mark and add it to your next attempt. Now if you do not pass the examination, you have to do it all over again! And it's very difficult now. The math test I did was the most absurd examination that I have ever done in my life! I put on 5 kilos because I was always sitting on a chair studying all day! You have the stress of waking up at 7am, going to school until 2pm, then having classes at the *frontistirio* from 3pm up to 7pm, taking a break until 8pm, and then from 8pm till 3am you have to study. From 3am until 7am you sleep. I've never met anyone who entered university without the *frontistirio*. In Greece it's an exaggeration. I know people who have sent their children to the *frontistirio* since they were six years old! It's the school's fault. There are so many theories. One of these is that, if schools work well, many teachers working in private become unemployed and parties lose votes. They are all in the black , only some *frontistiria* issue a fiscal receipt. We lose a

billion euros a year for the expenses of families who send their children to the *frontistirio*. At this point they could eliminate the public school but they don't do it because school must be free! (Student of Engineering)

According to me it would be a good thing to change the university system in Greece. It would be more fair. The selection can be done within the faculty. I was very good at some subjects but I didn't like maths, because maths has nothing to do with medicine. In other subjects I got high marks. But in mathematics and physics I got 8 and 6. Because of these two subjects, my average dropped. The problem with Greece is that you are forced to study in a department you don't like. Because of this we have a lot of "off course" students who are at university for years, who do nothing. While in Italy, from this point of view, it is better. As early as high school, we are forced to be really stressed out by attending courses, paying the *frontistirio*. Do you know how much money they make?! That is why they don't want to change! Here in Italy, from what I see, one can also have fun at high school. At 16-17 you are not mature, you can not understand what you want to do in your life. And you don't have all this anxiety that we have, that you can not go out of the home and you have to study all day. We have a system more competitive at high school than at university. People come out with a much higher knowledge of mathematics and physics, perhaps more than they need at their age. But then if you don't enter university, will it be useful? (Student of Medicine)

Regarding the hypothesis of university reform in Greece, it's impossible to stay in Europe and not comply with other countries. Greece is one of the poorest countries in Europe and therefore can not afford an alternative. The generation before us fought to get into Europe because they were convinced it was the best solution. And now we come and say "No, we don't want to stay in Europe, we don't want the Bologna Process!". (Student of Architecture)

Unlike the past when Greek students were in Italy without the knowledge of the Italian language, today they seem to be rather well equipped linguistically. In effect, the majority of the respondents claim to have learned the Italian language before they arrived in Italy.

The main places of learning were numerous private schools of foreign languages scattered throughout the Greek territory and where the study period was at least 1 year.

These schools do not limit themselves to just the ordinary and general teaching of the Italian language but also provide educational pro-

grams of practical use aimed at overcoming the university selective entry test and exam preparation[5]. Other students have learned Italian at secondary school, such as those at the Italian School of Athens, at a university or the Italian Cultural Institute. As for students who are children of mixed couples, the first approach to the Italian language has been since childhood and for many of them the in-depth process of learning is continued at secondary school (Italian School of Athens) with the end result of perfect bilingualism. Their stories are imbued with memories of the family history, with the parents' decision to not lose but keep alive the cultural identity of one of the two to compensate for the distance from Italy, to often listen to Italian singers at home and with visits to Italian family friends' homes.

Also those who have learned Italian after arriving in Italy have chosen a language school (Società Dante Alighieri[6]) or a language course university (University for Foreigners of Siena and Perugia[7]) as a principle means of learning. In addition, there are those who have

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5 Predominantly in the 1970s and 80s, the great Hellenic emigration of students to Italy has led to the proliferation, in almost all the Greek cities, of many private schools that teach Italian. In addition, the constant and massive influx of Italian tourism in Greece has promoted the learning of Italian. Nevertheless, and despite being one of the four most popular languages in Greece after English, French and German, the Italian language was introduced into the public system of secondary education only in the academic year 2008-2009. Yet, as Petrounias argued (1997), «the origins of modern Greek literature, with the Cypriot and Cretan schools, can be placed in the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance; a large part of its development is due to contact with Italy and, in part, with France. Even at the time of the birth of the Greek State, the School of the Ionian Islands, with Solomos, was based on the tradition of Italian literature. Thus, if we really want to reach a good level of awareness of our current history and modern Greek literature, the study of the Italian language and Italian studies plays an essential role».

6 The Dante Alighieri Society issues a certificate on the basis of a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Sapienza University of Rome. The Ministry of University and Research recognises the validity of the certificate of title that facilitates the registration of foreign university students.

7 The Italian language courses at the University for Foreigners of Perugia and Siena are structured in six levels according to the model of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The certificates issued by these universities are recognised by the Greek State as language titles valid in public administration.

learned Italian in a self-taught fashion without attending any course.

Equipped with strong language skills, due to the knowledge of other languages like English and French, most students have a good command of Italian and they said that they hadn't had so many problems in learning it. The small minority who met some difficulties, have had them substantially in the area of syntactic-grammatical use of scientific university language. In addition, issues related to psychological and relational questions have been reported, especially during the early period of stay, where students do not habitually speak Italian in the absence of new social networks with Italian people.

2.5. Factors determining the choice of Italian university as a place of study

In reference to the mobility of Greek students, causes and effects interact more than economic, religious or political migration. There is no doubt that, within a more holistic perspective, the reasons for the choice of an Italian university as a place of study intersect and overlap with the more general ones of the migration project that were argued previously. However, by narrowing the field only to the university, additional reasons can be clarified as to why young Hellenic students prefer an Italian university to continue their studies.

The highest percentage of responses refers to the greater accessibility of the Italian university system than the Greek one. As shown repeatedly, the limited number of students admitted to the Hellenic universities pushes many young Greeks to seek new university territories and prefer the Italian universities to those of other countries. Obviously this applies to all those disciplines (medicine, architecture and engineering) whose level of inaccessibility and competition is very high in Greece.

However, as already stated, although it represents the main push factor, the thesis of the limited number as the sole explanation for the Greek student mobility is likely to be reductive and simplistic. In fact, using the structural phenomenon of exclusion from the Greek university system as a unique macro factor to explain Greek student mobil-

ity, one cannot understand why, among the many students subject to the same structural conditions, only a fraction decide to have a migratory experience abroad.

Indeed, there are other attractive factors that determine the choice of Italian universities. Among these, as reflected in the responses, are the identification of the selected faculty as better than those of other countries and the prestige attributed to the attainment of an Italian degree. In reference to these two reasons, the faculty of Architecture at the Sapienza University is the most appreciated. In fact two-thirds of the students enrolled in this faculty have been influenced by the so-called "generation of 1955". That being the generation of Greek students who, during the 1980s, studied architecture in major cities and Italian universities (Florence, Milan, Rome and Venice), including the Sapienza University. After graduation many of them returned to Greece and, taking advantage of the Italian educational experience with very significant implications for contemporary Greek architecture, undoubtedly contributed to creating a positive and almost mythical image of the Italian universities and, specifically, the faculty of architecture[8].

> Italy has always been a destination for Greek students, especially for architecture in Florence. In Greece there is a beautiful community of architects who studied in Italy in the 1950s, 60s and 70s. And many of them had mixed marriages. And then there's a lot of experience in Italy. In Greece, Italian design is the most important in the world. (Student of Architecture)

> I chose an Italian university because it was easier to enter. Then because architecture in Rome is on another level. Also in Florence, but in Rome par-

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8 As Andreas Giakoumatakos says (2004, p. 31), a student of architecture who studied first in Florence and then Venice from 1975 until the second half of 1980, the Italian educational experience of many students in architecture in the 1980s has influenced both the style of Greek urban building and the point of view of theoretical and historical-critical research. In fact this generation of students made a huge contribution «to a real foundation of the historical-critical studies in Greece as regards architecture, particularly through the multifaceted activity of journalism, publishing and exhibition. Some of them now teach in the Hellenic faculties of architecture, having the historiographical experience and the methodological approaches that are an integral part of the tradition of Italian criticism, as an inevitable- and in some way irreplaceable - benchmark».

ticularly because here there are all ages, from ancient to modern. You can see everything. At that time, the Sapienza University was one of the top 30 universities in Europe. (Student of Architecture)

I chose an Italian university because it is easier to enter, even if it is more difficult to get out of. In Greece it's the opposite. Then because in Italy there are the most famous universities. For example, half of the Greek engineers studied in Italy. If you go to Greece and say that you are studying in Rome, they say "Ah, in Rome!". They don't say the same to those who study in Bulgaria or Romania. There are many people who go there to study medicine but they don't know really medicine. (Student of Engineering)

I chose the Sapienza University because my cousin was here and then because I knew it was a good university. I could go to other cities but I think that the Sapienza has a mark that counts. It has a certain prestige. (Student of Medicine)

In our country there has always been the mentality of having doctors, engineers, teachers and architects in our families. If many Greek students are enrolled in medicine here it is because here it's easier to enter, even if it doesn't mean that the studies are easier. And then Italy has a good tradition for studies in medicine. They are recognised in Greece. And the same for pharmacology: my cousin and her husband have a pharmacy in Greece and they sent their daughter to study pharmacology in Perugia. (Student of Political Science)

A large number of the students interviewed come from a family background characterised by a medium-high economic and social status. As in the past, where the social distinction and prestige and the allure of Western Europe drove many young people from affluent families to study at top universities in Europe, today we are witnessing a similar phenomenon. For many Greeks studying abroad is synonymous with professional advancement, more economic gains and growth in their social status. Consequently, student mobility tends to reproduce differences in educational and economic status between various social groups and to strengthen the different study opportunities. Studying abroad, especially at a good university in an economically advanced country, as well as allowing access to knowledge, confers a certain prestige and recognition. In other words, it is a fundamental means of social distinction: the degree is a guarantee of

knowledge and respect, the country of destination gives a wealth of experience and the language learned provides a passport to participate in a cosmopolitan society.

Today the students leave their country driven by a rational choice oriented to a self-interest and as «social beings who seek to achieve better outcomes for themselves, their families, actively shaping migration processes» (Castels 2004, p. 860). Moreover, more and more students select their study destination based on the academic reputation of the university and the quality of training and teaching programs. All this is achieved through a wide range of information on higher education programs and the international classifications of universities, available both in print and online. In addition, over time, influential networks are created and strengthened that can provide useful information on the requirements and costs of enrolment and material and practical aspects.

Other factors that determined the choice of an Italian university are related to the fact that Italy is historically a destination preferred by the Hellenic students, that the cost of the Italian life and tuition fees is lower than other countries, that one or both parents had studied in Italy and that they wanted to follow the advice of friends and acquaintances who live in Italy and Greece.

The full awareness and knowledge of the historical link between the two countries and of Italy as a traditional destination for study, accompanied by the family history of some students, often emerges from the stories of the people interviewed. Some people in fact, having heard countless testimonies and experiences from their parents or friends and relatives who had studied in Italy and now live in Greece, accepted their advice and decided to follow in their footsteps by enrolling sometimes even at the same university faculty. In some cases, the advice came from the Italian language professor with whom they had a course prior to the experience of migration or from family members, relatives and partners who came to study in Italy a few years earlier.

> Also my aunt studied medicine here and she met her Greek husband here. At that time, from what I've heard, many Greek students were in Bologna. And also in Pisa, Padua and Parma. They called them the three Ps. (Student

of Medicine)

I chose an Italian university because Italy is a traditional destination for Greek students. My father has ten friends who are engineers who studied in Rome and Milan. They also said to my mother not to allow me to study in Greece because all Italian civil engineering universities are better than Greek ones. (Student of Engineering)

I know that in the 1970s many Greek students went to study in Florence, also those who did not pass in Greece. Many relatives and friends influenced me in choosing architecture. I have an uncle who is an architect. Also another person who studied architecture in Bologna advised me to come here. Another friend who was studying in Italy suggested Perugia, Rome, Milan, Turin and Bologna. Other reasons were because here a degree has a certain prestige and because Italy, together with other countries, is a destination for the Greeks. (Student of Engineering)

I know that in the 1970s there were many Greek students here. My dad is a doctor and he has many colleagues who graduated here, many in Pavia. The Greek mentality is a bit strange because everyone came here, even if some couldn't graduate. There are still students who are 35-40 years old. Eternal students. Once, medicine was open in number and the admission exams were not required. But I don't know why even now the majority of students are enrolled in medicine. Many of them have a parent who studied medicine or something else in Italy. So I think this also counts. Perhaps it is still considered a prestigious faculty. (Student of Medicine)

The lower cost of living and tuition fees than in other countries has also been a pull factor. In effect some students, especially those who belong to families with low and middle economic status, have preferred Italy to other countries of northern Europe for the most favourable economic conditions inside and outside the university. The possibility of going to study in the Balkan countries, characterised by cheaper universities and living costs, was discarded a priori because they were considered less prestigious and qualified in terms of training or because, when they chose the university, they were not yet members of the EU (Romania and Bulgaria).

The children of friends of my parents had already begun to study here in Italy and they had said that Rome was a city more livable compared to those

of the north and south of Italy and at a lower cost compared to the northern European countries. And then, since Italy is a European Union country, you wouldn't have to take an examination of equivalence. So you came, you ended up studying and returned to Greece. Once, for example in countries like Bulgaria and Romania, you couldn't do like that, because you had to go back to Greece and take the examination of equivalence to become a doctor. (Student of Medicine)

I never thought about going to study medicine in countries like Romania and Bulgaria because the university level is low there and you get your degree with a little bribery of *feta*, *baklava*, *ouzo* and *raki*! (Student of Medicine)

Another factor, although represented by a low percentage, was to have accepted the decision taken by their parents. In this case it was students with a father or mother born in Italy or who had studied at an Italian university. Their stories describe how the existential and training experience was set and dictated by family history. Often they are brothers or sisters who, in the presence of a parental reference circle in Italy (uncles and grandparents), go to live in a family "habitus", that is a physical and social space shared and legitimised by their parents.

I chose an Italian university because my parents studied here and because they decided for me. It was decided right from my birth. My parents studied at the Sapienza and we studied at the Sapienza too. Also our youngest sister will study psychology at the Sapienza. My parents have influenced not so much my field of study. Rather they have influenced the choice to come to Rome and to enrol at the Sapienza. (Student of Interfaculty)

In addition to the studies, I came here in part because my parents had decided for me. I didn't want to come to Italy. It has been a nightmare for me to move here. The first year was awful. If I think of my first period here I want to cry. My parents met here and they said "Ok, let's get married and if we live in Italy our children will go to a Greek school, while if we go to Greece we'll send them to an Italian school". By choosing to go to Greece and enroling us at an Italian school we have been a little forced to live here. I had known since I was 5 years old that I would come to Rome to study! (Student of Psychology)

Finally, minor but very significant reasons appear. First of all, the

existence of "thread" that has generated a continuum in the training field for having started a path of study at an Italian school in Greece (Italian School of Athens) and then the bureaucratic difficulties of participating in *panellinies* because of the lack of recognition of the secondary education diploma acquired in a private foreign school in Greece (French school). Finally, the desire to implement educational programs not found in the Greek universities (specific programs at the Faculty of Humanities) and obtaining a scholarshipm have influenced the choice of an Italian university as a place of higher education.

2.6. Study path of Hellenic students in the universities of Rome

Over the last fifteen years the Italian higher education system has also seen a succession of reforms and laws. The two most recent and significant interventions were the Gelmini reform and the Berlinguer reform. The first has started a process of profound transformation aiming at harmonising the Italian higher education system in accordance with European guidelines outlined in the Declaration of the Sorbonne (May 25, 1998). This has occurred through the modification of teaching programs and the introduction of important innovations in the organisation of degree courses. Firstly, replacing the four-year degree with an undergraduate degree and a master's degree of two years (3+2) respectively, equipped with 180 and 120 credits, and the introduction of a limited number in some faculties and with reference to graduate programs.

The most recent Gelmini reform is oriented towards reorganising the university system through the modification of the internal functioning of the universities, the merger of universities and the reduction of faculties which has reduced the number of teaching programs.

Just as the Greek system, the Italian higher education system is based on a binary model: the university sector (universities, polytechnics, special colleges) and the non-university sector that consists of several types of institutions belonging to different disciplines, such as Higher Education for Fine Arts, Music and Dance including the Academies of Fine Arts.

There are State universities and non-State universities that are legally recognised along with telematic universities. They are divided into faculties, departments, institutes and service centres.

The current university system provides, respecting the autonomy of each university, the allocation to the universities to regulating the didactic policies of their courses of study. The didactic regulations in practice determine the name and the educational objectives of the course of study, the framework of the learning activities to be included in the curricula, the credits assigned to each course and the modalities of the final examination for graduation.

Each university also defines the mode of access through an entrance test, the number of available places in the chronological order of registration, the evaluation of high school leaving qualifications and so on. The entrance test can be both preliminary and selective.

The preliminary test is mandatory and is designed to detect the presence of any training gaps; in case of failure, the student can choose a different course of study or to enrol, however, in the selected degree program. In this case the gaps that emerge in the test are expressed as debits and must be recovered within the first year.

In the case of selective tests, they may be of an aptitude nature, notional and mixed. The selection of topics is carried out by universities and the number of available places takes into account various factors, such as the ability to absorb graduates from the labour market and the relationship between students and services offered by the university. This access can be programmed at the national level or independently by each university. For example, the access to courses in medicine and surgery, veterinary medicine, dentistry, architecture, primary education sciences and health care professions are programmed nationwide.

In accordance with the Berlinguer reform, Italian university studies are organised in three cycles. The first cycle, that is equivalent to a bachelor degree, consists of "corso di laurea di primo livello" structured into 47 classes and its normative time to completion is three years. The degree is acquired after 180 credits, and the student can continue his or her studies in the second cycle.

The second cycle is constituted by "corso di laurea magistrale" (2nd degree), "corso di laurea magistrale a ciclo unico" (five/six-year Masters degree) and "master di primo livello" (first level Masters).

The "corso di laurea magistrale", which has replaced the previous "laurea specialistica" according to the Ministerial Decree 270/04, is two years and consists of 109 classes with the award of 120 credits. The title awarded is the "laurea magistrale" that allows studies to continue with a "master di II livello" (second level masters), "corso di perfezionamento" (specialisation course), "corso di specializzazione" (post-graduate course) or a "dottorato di ricerca" (PhD). The "corso di laurea magistrale a ciclo unico" which can be accessed directly with the secondary school diploma or a recognised equivalent foreign degree, concerns a limited number of degree courses (Medicine, Dentistry and Dental Implants, Veterinary Medicine, Pharmacology, Architecture, Engineering and Law). It has a duration of five or six years and, after gaining 300-360 credits, confers the "laurea magistrale a ciclo unico". The first level masters, which is accessed with the "laurea di primo livello" or equivalent qualification obtained abroad and any entrance selection, has a minimum annual period. Though included in a second cycle of studies, the acquisition of this title, after gaining 60 credits, does not allow access to a PhD or other post-graduate courses.

The third cycle is constituted by the "dottorato di ricerca" (Ph.D.), "corso di specializzazione" (post-graduate course) and the "master di secondo livello" (second level masters). The dottorato di ricerca, where access is possible only after obtaining a "laurea magistrale" or a foreign degree recognised as equivalent and after a competitive examination, has a duration of three or four years and provides the academic degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The "corso di specializzazione", whose duration is defined by the didactic regulations, is possible if the student holds a "laurea magistrale" or a foreign equivalent title, and after passing a competitive examination. Finally, the master di secondo livello has a minimum annual period and gives 60 credits. A "laurea magistrale" or equivalent qualification obtained abroad and any entrance test are required for access.

Figure 4. Structure of the Italian higher education system
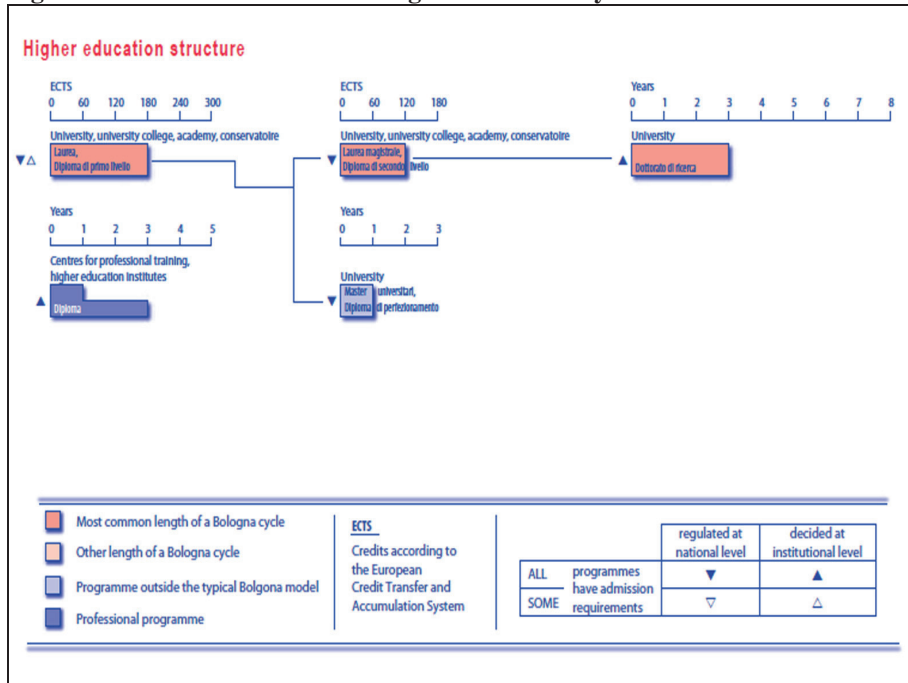
Source: Eurydice, *Focus on Higher Education in Europe 2010*

The interviewed students cover almost all higher education institutions in the city of Rome, both the university sector (state, parastatal, private and papal universities) and non-university sector (Academy of Fine Arts[9]), as well as nearly all disciplinary areas with 42 different courses.

In the academic years 2010-11, a large proportion are enrolled at the Sapienza University which is the oldest and most important Roman State University. The decision to interview a large number of

9 The Academy of Fine Arts belongs to the system of Higher Education for Fine Arts, Music and Dance (AFAM). Although not strictly included in the university sector, the Academy of Fine Arts is recognised as an institute of higher education. Divided into three cycles, according to the model already adopted by the university sector of the "3+2" and inspired by the Bologna Declaration, the Academy may grant academic degrees of the first level (equivalent to "laurea di primo livello") and secondary (equivalent to "laurea magistrale").

Hellenic students enrolled at the Sapienza reflects the framework of the Ministry of Education's official statistics that record their high presence at this university.

Following, in order of number of enrolments, the main institutions are the Roma Tre University and the Tor Vergata University, representing

Respectively the third and the second state university in Rome by date of foundation. Finally, by even less, other institutions are the Accademia delle Belle Arti, the Libera Università degli Studi Maria SS. Assunta di Roma (LUMSA), the Libera Università degli Studi Per l'Innovazione e le Organizzazioni (LUSPIO), the Pontificio Istituto Orientale (PIO) and the SSML Gregorio VII.

As in the past and in accordance with the official data on enrolments in Italian and Roman institutions, the faculties of Medicine (Medicine and Surgery, Medicine and Dentistry, Medicine and Psychology, Medicine and Pharmacology) and Architecture continue to represent the most desirable faculties and to attract most of the Hellenic students. The other main faculties belonging to the medical and scientific-technological area in order are those of Engineering, Mathematical, Physical and Natural Sciences, and Pharmacology. Regarding the area of humanities, social and economic, are found the faculty of Letters and Philosophy and, thereafter, Economics, Psychology, Human Sciences, Law, Interfaculty, Communication Sciences, Political Science and Oriental Studies.

Some students have modified their course of studies changing faculties or universities. The move occurred after having acquired the awareness that they had selected studies not very related to their interests or because they were unable to enter their chosen faculty. It is the case, for example, that some students of medicine who entered first the faculty of pharmacology and biology after failing the entrance test decide, the year after, to move to the faculty of medicine after trying again and passing the test.

With regard to gender, among the male students we find high rates of enrolment at the faculties of Medicine and, thereafter, Engineering and Architecture are registered, while the female students prefer Architecture and the Humanities.

It is interesting to note a widespread trend not only in Greece but

also in many other European countries. Namely, the high correlation between the level of students' studies and those of their parents. In fact, delving into the personal biographies of the interviewees and their family educational contexts, it was found that more than half of the students have parents with a high level of education.

Instead, in reference to the choice of studies, there is no correspondence between their training paths. Only a minority followed in the footsteps of their parents and this relates above all to the medical area (medicine and pharmacology).

Regarding the type of studies, the majority of respondents are studying for the "corso di laurea magistrale a ciclo unico" and the "corso di laurea di primo livello". In the first case it is almost exclusively made up of students enrolled at the Faculty of Medicine and Architecture. In fact, all degree courses in Medicine require a single cycle of six years. In reference to the faculty of architecture, the most popular degree program is "Architettura EU a ciclo unico" at the Sapienza University, lasting five years. In the case of the three-year "laurea di primo livello", it is mainly students from the faculties of Letters and Philosophy, Architecture and Mathematics, Physical and Natural Sciences, whose more followed courses are: "Lingue e culture del mondo moderno", "Scienza dell'architettura e della città" and "Scienze biologiche". To a lesser degree there are those who are studying to obtain a two-year "laurea specialistica/magistrale di secondo livello" especially enrolled in psychology and those who are still enrolled in the "vecchio ordinamento"[10] (old university regulation, ante MD 509/99), in particular at the faculty of Medicine, Engineering, Mathematical, Physical and Natural Sciences and Economics.

More than half of the interviewed students are "off course" (stu-

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10 The "Vecchio ordinamento" refers to courses of study prior to the Ministerial Decree 509/1999 of the so-called Zecchino reform, Minister of the then Ministry of University and Scientific Research and Technology. The "vecchio ordinamento" degree was given at the end of the course of study lasting four, five or six years, according to the chosen discipline. The Ministerial Decree 270/2004 has made most of the "vecchio ordinamento" diplomas equivalent to the classes of "lauree specialistiche" (now "lauree magistrali"). In Italy, in the academic year 2009-10, the students still enrolled in the "vecchio ordinamento" accounted for 7,3% of the total (CNVSU 2011).

dents who haven't finished their studies in the prescribed time) or are repeating. The highest rates are recorded in the Tor Vergata University and Sapienza. They are mainly students enrolled at the Faculty of Pharmacology and, thereafter, medicine, economics, mathematics, physical and natural sciences, letters and philosophy and architecture. Regarding the type of degree course, in all the different disciplines belonging to the medical, scientific-technological and economic area, especially the students who are pursuing a "corso di laurea magistrale a ciclo unico" (medicine, pharmacology and architecture) and of course those of the "vecchio ordinamento" are struggling to stay on course. In reference to gender, the percentage is higher among male students than female students.

The disconcerting data are that, among those registered, more than half are inactive. That is they have been studying for 1 year from registration without having passed any examinations or received any training credits in that last year. Moreover up to half of all "off course" students have been studying for over ten years since their enrolment. Thus, also in reference to the Italian universities, we can talk about the "eternal students". The causes that hinder their studies or that create the increase in inactive students who do not take exams are multiple. First of all, the difficulty encountered in the study of some disciplines traditionally considered hard and then conducting one or more jobs simultaneously during their path of education. In fact among respondents there are student-workers who are often unable to combine study with work and this certainly affects the duration of their university commitments.

> Many young Greeks study here and take a long time to finish their studies, an average 10-12 years. I am enrolled in medicine at the Sapienza. I'm an "off course" student and I no longer attend university. A typical phenomenon is people like me who will never finish university. I am enrolled, but more mentally. As well as medicine, I do something else. I'm not one of those who is financially maintained by their parents. If you also have to work it's hard to study, especially in a challenging faculty such as medicine. (Student of Medicine)

We have to add to that all the practical problems that an out of town student's life, and most non-Italians have (housing conditions,

lack of family support, adjustment to a new environment, etc.).

Among the other main causes emerge: the original idea that studies in Italian universities are simpler than those of the Hellenic universities, second thoughts in having undertaken a course of study that does not correspond to their interests and that leads some students to review their academic careers, the transition from the "vecchio ordinamento" to the "nuovo ordinamento" that has resulted in the disruption of their educational programs, and the continuation of language difficulties in the presence of oral examinations that they are not yet used to.

> I don't know what happens to the Greeks when they get here, because they take a long time to finish. Perhaps self-esteem is lowered and they can not interact with their new environment and the university. They shut themselves in the house or make friends with only groups of Greeks. Then they become lazy, they are not active and the years pass. I wish the Greek students didn't spend all these years at university. You can't reach 35 and start working. It's not only their fault, I don't know, it's like a mechanism. I've met lots of them. They shut themselves in the house, they don't attend classes, don't take the exams, they aren't active. At least for the first years. Maybe because they are out of their environment, away from their protective family. And when they finish they are 30 or they are without a degree and they don't know what to do. Or, after 15 years of study, they get a degree without work experience, and they find nothing, no job. (Student of Economics)

> We Greeks have this problem: we come here with the wrong mentality because we think that the Italian university is easy and sometimes the degree course slips away out of our hands. Because we take a long time to figure out how to study here and get used to it. In Greece no one says to us that here it is easy to enter university but it's difficult to get the degree. Because everyone thinks: beautiful Italy, beautiful "dolce vita"... but it's not like that! Even the private schools that prepare students don't say to you the reality because it's not convenient for them! (Student of Engineering)

Moreover, some laxity on the part of the Hellenic students of past generations that often recurs in the current situation should not be underestimated even if it is right to point out that many students in the years 1960-70 prolonged the conclusion of their studies to dedicate themselves to political militancy (Papoutsis 1997). The desire for an experience far from home, independently and with no family restrictions, and of not wanting to give up the night life entertainment and

leisure activities are not always compatible with study. Moreover, the awareness of being kept by their families economically induce many students to adopt a lax attitude that involves the extension and postponement of their university commitments.

Finally other factors that determine the phenomenon of "eternal students" are the poor quality of student services in universities, the intention to postpone military service that is compulsory in Greece, or the full awareness of having a guaranteed employment by their parents in Greece after having graduated. In this case it has to do with students enrolled in medicine, pharmacology and engineering whose parents are holders or owners of a medical office, a pharmacy or a buliding firm.

> I'm an "off course" student. I'm in my eighth year. And this is very typical of the Greek students! All Greeks who come here belong to a higher economic class, as well as cultural. And they are not obliged to hurry up and finish school, because parents are willing to pay for a studio flat, rather than a double room. So they don't have an economic need nor the need to finish. And many students have a job waiting for them in Greece, because someone has a father who is a doctor or has good connections... They don't have the anxiety of building their future and their lives. I've also met people who had parents who did not even know how many exams their children had really done. (Student of Architecture)

> I'm an "off course" student. Here it's very easy to lose the thread. You know, when you're away from your country, you want also to have a student life. I would recommend to the future Greek students to enrol without making the mistakes I did, in the sense that you have to start university with a good program. If you leave university, the university leaves you! Many students come here believing that Italy is like Greece, but it's completely different: you can't have the Greek student life in Italy. Here it's easier to enter but it's more difficult to get out. You must not make the mistakes that we did in the first years because we looked for Greece in Italy. The ways and the customs of the people are different. In Italy you must look for Italy, the way they live, you must get everything. (Student of Medicine)

As for the students regularly enrolled in degree courses, the highest rates are recorded in the Roma Tre University and parastatal and private universities (Lumsa, Luspio and SSML Gregorio VII), and it covers both the "corsi di laurea di primo livello" and "corsi di laurea

specialistica/magistrale". The main faculties concerned are those involving the humanities, social and economic area (law, communication science, political science, psychology and engineering. These are students who, in a normal week of classes, go to university with some regularity. In fact, in reference to the current year, their frequency is on average more than four days a week and the average number of lessons attended is three, compared to "off course" students who do not go to universities very often and do not attend lessons any more.

In reference to university performance and success, the average exam marks achieved up to the current academic year is equal to 25/30. Among the variables that affect success in their studies were considered academic performance, the regularity of the studies, the subject area, the type of university and gender. The students who achieved a high rating for secondary school (18-20 for *Genikò Lykeio* and 90-100 for the Italian School of Athens), who are regularly enrolled and attending university faculties belonging to the humanities and social and economic area have a better academic performance. In particular the students enrolled at the faculty of Psychology and those of Letters and Philosophy of Sapienza University are outstanding compared to the students of the faculty of Pharmacology and Mathematical, Physical and Natural Sciences at Sapienza and Tor Vergata. The female students are slightly more successful than their male colleagues, while the kinds of universities (state vs. non-state) does not seem to be a discriminating variable.

2.7. Evaluation of the university system: strengths and weaknesses of the Roman universities

This paragraph describes and analyses the evaluations expressed by students in the university structure that they belong to. Their judgment of university teaching and internal services can be very important in understanding the role of the students as stakeholders within the educational system and to improve decision making and ensure equal opportunities for quality education, with particular attention to under represented groups. From this point of view, the analysis of the

evaluation of the university experience facilities with all the "problems and peculiarities attached" could be very useful to better understand issues, problems and dynamics of inclusion into the Italian university fabric in relation not only to Hellenic and foreign students but also to the entire student world.

Offering adequate and quality services can indeed counter the irregularity of the studies, that is widespread among Hellenic students. The lack of support services may result in the acceleration of the decision to leave courses. As we have seen, in the case of Greek students the irregularity of the studies is often the final step of a social process of attrition that began with the exclusion from the Greek university system that can become the cause of alienation for academic study, loss of sense of community among students and renunciation of the expectations of academic success. Of course it is not correct to identify the absence of adequate teaching and educational services as the sole and exclusive cause of the irregularity and the risk of abandonment that can result. The issue is far more complex and thus risks becoming reductive and simplistic, given also the presence of factors outside the university. However, a detailed analysis on the availability of higher education services could be useful for any improvement in their quality and to promote the launch of a national plan effective in countering the risk of irregularity of the university studies.

In general, the students interviewed value the universities and their services in a positive way. In fact, the judgment is good or excellent for the majority of the students, while only a minority consider them insufficient. More specifically, we note that students enrolled at the Roma Tre University, private universities and the Tor Vergata University have a more positive attitude towards their universities, unlike those who study at the Sapienza University who are slightly more critical.

Besides considering the single university as a discriminant variable, we must also consider the university faculty of enrolment.

As for the Sapienza University, the most positive evaluation comes from the students of architecture, medicine and engineering. They appreciate above all the teaching programs due to the high competence of the professors who, in the words of the students, have made the Sapienza in general, and these three faculties in particular, excellent cen-

tres of international study[11]. The students of the Faculty of Architecture, in 2000 broken up into two different faculties (Ludovico Quaroni and Valle Giulia) and reunited in 2010, particularly appreciate the Central Library of Valle Giulia, considered the most important library of architecture in Italy, and the impressive architecture of the buildings that make up the faculty.

> My judgment on my faculty is good. We have enough good teachers. And then the environment, where we're in Villa Borghese, is gorgeous. It is quite well connected by public transport. Compared to Quaroni we are a bit better off here. The classrooms are smaller, sometimes you don't hear any noise, it seems like an office building. If a student in Greece asks me for advice, if coming to Italy would be a good thing, I'd answer that it depends on his studies: if he wants to study economics I would say to him to go to England. The British and the Americans have set the world economy. See Smith. Greeks and Romans have established the architecture, as well as the Renaissance. So a student of architecture should come here, also because Rome and Florence are constant museums: buildings, villas and so on… I'm satisfied because architecture was what that I wanted to do. I am satisfied with the university program we have because it is not like the Athens Polytechnic, where there are 8 courses for the history of architecture. We have 3 courses: one from ancient architecture to the Renaissance, one from the Renaissance to the Baroque, and the last one from the Baroque to the present. A few courses but useful. And there is always a logic. (Student of Architecture)

> Here engineering is more valid than the Athens Polytechnic. I think that

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11 Among the main ratings on university systems worldwide in 2011, the Academic Ranking of World Universities ranks the Sapienza University, together with the University of Pisa, first among Italian universities. At the global level it is between 102 and 150-th place down from 70th as regards 2003. The principal evaluation criteria are publications in scientific journals and Nobel prizes awarded to alumni and current staff.

With reference to the evaluations and rankings produced by QS World University Ranking, the evaluation of Sapienza is rather less good. In fact, among the top 500 universities in the world, it stands in the 210-th position, losing 20 seats from the previous year. The evaluation criteria are based on six indicators: peer assessment (Academic peer review), evaluation of the employers (Employer Review), presence of foreign students and teachers (International students and International faculty), publications by number of citations (citations per faculty) and the relationship between students and faculty (faculty student).

Italian universities and the Sapienza are the best, even worldwide. At the Sapienza they teach you to think, I see the difference. And so I know how to think. It's the best thing that the Italian university gave me because it gives you the tools to reason and solve any problem. (Student of Engineering)

In contrast, the stories of students enrolled at the faculty of pharmacology reveal a rather negative judgment. The critical elements identified mainly concern the organisational-administrative and organisational-teaching system: lack of information at the registrar's office, poor communication between teachers and the registrar's office, lack of laboratories with an imbalance between theory and practice, overcrowding in classrooms. In addition the students are dissatisfied with the incompleteness of the information on the website of the faculty, especially in relation to the organisation of teaching and the possibility of professional job opportunities once they have earned their degree and based on their personal expectations.

Regarding the problems of the Sapienza, the registrar's office is not very up to date with the teachers. A professor says to you something, then you go to the registrar's office and they say to you something else, then they say to you they don't know, that they will inform you… It is as if the faculty and the registrar's office were two different offices. The registrar's office is also a bit grumpy. They treat you badly and don't give you the right information. They say to you to look at the web site of that faculty but then there's nothing there. (Student of Pharmacology)

A final critical element concerns the activities of tutoring. That is the set of activities and services aimed at guiding and assisting students throughout the course of studies. The criticisms have more to do with the teaching structure in the sense that the support activities are mostly carried out by those "peers", not properly qualified, with low skills and professional experience (young students). The students interviewed generally require a rethink in the way of conceiving the system of tutoring in their faculty inviting consideration of all issues related to the university life of a young foreign student, as the process of integration into the university fabric and the question of language barriers.

> There are professors who sometimes can't come to class because they have a conference or something else. And they leave someone else in their place and these, especially recently, are people who have a doctorate and who are not skilled to do lessons. They can't speak, they don't know how to communicate, they come only to read some transparencies, they stutter…It's absurd! Because I have sacrificed 10 years to finish my education and I don't accept doing my best and taking the minimum. And this has been happening recently: they send a person who makes fun of us. I also know how to read the transparencies! We are not here for free, we all pay! I'm here and I want to learn, so you must give me this opportunity! And the students are afraid to protest. (Student of Pharmacology)

A critical issue common to almost all the faculties of the Sapienza is the situation of chaos perceived by students, due to the high numbers of enrolled students and which also has negative repercussions on the organisation of their university career.

Even at the organisational teaching level complaints are found about: the inadequacy of classrooms and laboratories (in the disciplines of the medical and scientific-technological area), poor communication on the date of exam sessions (Psychology), the overlapping of several courses on the same day and at the same time or the long wait before sitting an exam (Letters and Philosophy), forms of "baronato" (fiefdom) as regards the behaviour of professors (Letters and Philosophy), the general presence of a too old teaching staff (Mathematical, Physical and Natural Sciences). Some students (Letters and Philosophy, Economics, Mathematical, Physical and Natural Sciences) have encountered difficulties in the transition from old to new system ("vecchio" and "nuovo ordinamento"). The main problem has been the increase and the fragmentation of curricula and examinations after the Education Reform (DM 509/99). In many cases this increase has occurred without the real motivation of a new educational plan appropriate to the labour market, the world of research and the needs of students.

In addition, the increase in the degree courses and examinations, often with few credits, has led to problems both for students by raising the level of difficulty and for teachers due to the compression of educational programs and the lowering of quality standards mainly caused

by the cutting of teaching hours for examinations[12].

> I was under the "vecchio ordinamento" and I passed to the "nuovo ordi-
> namento" in 2003. I have taken a dozen exams and I miss 15. Meanwhile, I
> have worked as a waitress. This work took up all my energy morning and
> night. So I couldn't attend and ended up with the "vecchio ordinamento". So
> I thought to finish soon by moving to the "nuovo ordinamento". But it didn't
> happen because the exams passed from 25 to 36 and, since I worked, I took
> an average of 3-4 exams a year with ups and downs. It's true that these exams
> were smaller but they were always so many. (Student of Economics)

In reference to other state universities (Tor Vergata and Roma Tre),
the private and the Academy of Fine Arts, the level of satisfaction
with the education offered and university services is much higher. The
most appreciated aspect, especially by those who have moved from
the Sapienza, is on the organisation and management of university
administrative and teaching facilities.

> After one year at the Sapienza I took a leap and I enrolled at Lumsa. At
> the organisational level, the Lumsa is much better. Of course, the standard of
> the Sapienza is the highest but, since the Lumsa is a smaller and private uni-
> versity, it gives you all the attention you need. All teachers know us, maybe
> not by name, but they recognise us during the examinations. At the Lumsa
> you pay and services must be there for you. It's not like a public university
> where, if you go to the registrar's office, they don't give you what you need
> and you must come back the day after. They are obliged to give you what you
> ask for, because they live thanks to your money. And at the organisational
> level, the Lumsa is much better. (Student of Law)

Regarding the recognition of their secondary school diplomas for

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12 In the words of Graziosi (2010, pp. 117-118), after the reform the increase in
the educational courses and the splitting of the four-year degree into a "three+two"
has resulted at least in a doubling up of courses in a degree, the repetition of many
subjects with different and more "specialised" names, and the teaching of two
courses instead of the one traditional course.

In any case it must be said, as reported on the "Eleventh Report of the National
Committee for the Evaluation of the University System" (CNVSU 2011), that «in
recent years there has been, perhaps as a result of ministerial regulations, a clear
process of rationalisation and reduction in fragmentation of the educational courses
and reduction in the number of activated courses».

the equivalence between academic foreign degrees and the corresponding Italian degrees, the majority of respondents have not encountered any difficulty with the registrar's office for foreign students. The very few cases where they have encountered problems have affected the way and waiting times in Greece for the issuing of the necessary documentation, accompanied by an official translation in Italian and a declaration of its value by the Italian diplomatic or consular representative in Greece[13].

A final consideration with respect to the evaluation of the teaching and university services is that, in the presence of a good academic performance and regularity in their studies, the level of satisfaction seems to be higher. On the contrary, among the "off course" students with low average results in examinations a more critical attitude prevails. In a sense, a similar situation to when they were in Greece occurs again, where the status of the complaint was justified by the sense of frustration generated by the exclusion from the Greek university system.

A specific question of the questionnaire has concerned the student/teacher relationship. Persons interviewed were asked their opinion on how many professors are willing to listen to students. Unlike, as discussed above, the general positive regard toward their universities and related services, this time the judgment is rather negative. Also in this case, the highest negative percentage is found among students of the Sapienza University, especially among those enrolled at the Faculty of Mathematical, Physical and Natural Sciences, Letters and Philosophy and Engineering. Teachers are criticised for being too distant from the problems of students, poor communication, especially regarding the educational program (cancelled or postponed classes), too many commitments for extra educational activities that take up time that should be spent teaching in classes and continuing unavail-

13 The Greek secondary school qualifications for entry into an Italian university are: the *Apolityrion lykeio* (high school diploma) together with the *Veveosi Prosvasis* (Certificate of academic eligibility), provided that the grade obtained for the *Apolityrion* is at least 10/20 (minimum pass rate in Greece), or just the *Apolityrion*, when conferred before 1999 to the students able to document that they have lived in Italy in the period 1999-2001 (coinciding with the transition period set by Greek legislation in order to achieve the above statement).

ability during office hours.

> At the Sapienza communication with teachers doesn't work because they don't want to communicate. With whom should I have talked when I had problems with the integration and language? I never found a teacher with whom I could talk. When in the first years I went for my study plan, I was shy and afraid of these people and there was no communication. But now that I have more confidence, they continue to treat me with indifference. I've never been able to have a communication with them. Then I wondered "Why should I give my energy to these type of people?". I could communicate only with one teacher. Maybe study is not for me. Maybe if I had a good tutor or more involvement it would be different. (Student of Letters and Philosophy)

Instead there are less critical judgements among students of the Tor Vergata University. There is no doubt that the amount of available teaching staff and the small teaching load have an impact on the quality of training in general, and the willingness of professors to be present to their students in particular. Indeed, if we examine the ratio of students enrolled in a university course and permanent teaching staff (professors, associates and researchers) of Tor Vergata compared to that of Sapienza, in the academic year 2008-09, we observe a lower value equal to 22,3 compared to 26,7 (CNVSU 2011).

Another question of the questionnaire has been whether the students would change the training path, if they could go back. About half of the respondents have answered negatively. They would remain at the same university where they are currently enrolled without changing their curriculum and faculty. Less than half of the students have regretted their university experience, while a minority were not able to respond.

Among those who would change their training path, more than half of the students would change the university but not the faculty. Many that are enrolled at the Sapienza University answered that they would leave for a smaller and more organised university, with easier programs of study, both in the city of Rome (Tor Vergata and Roma Tre) and that of another Italian city (Milan, Pisa, Camerino, L'Aquila, Naples, Catanzaro) or of another country (United Kingdom, Greece, Spain, Holland).

> If I could choose to change my training path, I would change the university but not the faculty. I would go to a smaller town where the university is more organised. Because at the Sapienza the problem is that there are too many enrolled. In a smaller university there's less chaos, it's more familiar and you feel more comfortable. While the Sapienza is more dispersive. And it would have been better for me because I would go out less and concentrate more on studying. (Student of Engineering)

Instead a minority would do the opposite, remaining in the university where they are enrolled but changing the faculty. The changes would be, for example, from architecture to anthropology, from the communication sciences to psychology, from medicine to biology. Finally, a more restricted group have regretted both the university and the faculty while wanting to continue studying. In this case, the choice turns out to be far more radical because they would be willing to leave Italy for another country (the U.S. and U.K.) and the chosen discipline of study (medicine) to start a new and completely different cycle of studies (from medicine to photography, journalism, marketing or physical sciences).

As for the university, the students of Roma Tre and private universities are more convinced of studies undertaken and the choice of the university. While, in reference to respective faculties found across the board in all universities, the largest positive percentage is found among the students of economics, psychology, engineering and letters and philosophy, as compared with those enrolled in medicine whose majority, if they could go back in time, would restart their course of studies.

Variables such as the regularity in the studies, the academic performance and the level of satisfaction with the university and university services affect the desire to change the course of study. In fact, a large proportion of students regularly enrolled, with an average rating of exams equal to or greater than 27 and less critical of their university have no regret and no inclination to change their studies.

> If I could go back, I would stay here. When I registered here the best faculties for psychology were in Rome and Padua. Then they opened other faculties, as in Cesena. I chose Rome also as a city. Thinking of going to live in Cesena made me a little anxious. I came from Athens that was a pretty cha-

otic city, a big city. So my choice was based on these two parameters: the city and the quality of the university. And then psychology is only at the Sapienza. (Student of Psychology)

Finally, the majority of respondents believe that what they have been studying will help them to find employment in the labour market. The students from the medical (medicine), scientific-technological (engineering) and economic (economics) area are the most optimistic.

2.8. Geographical distribution and settlement: territorial polarisation and cohabitation

With an average time spent in Italy amounting to 6 years, almost all respondents live in Rome. Only four of them have chosen a town in the Roman hinterland as a place of habitation (Pavona, Mentana, Zagarolo).

As reported previously, just under a fifth have their permanent legal residence in Italy and within that the majority of the students are resident in Rome. In this case it is not only people with dual citizenship who live in apartments owned by family or relatives but also students who live in Italy with an average residence time of 11 years or people who are very rooted in the capital and who have experienced a process of social inclusion of longer duration.

In reference to geographical distribution, there is an almost complete coverage of the urban area of the city of Rome. In effect the residence of students is located in almost every Municipality of the capital (15 of 20 Municipalities). However, we can observe a certain polarisation of the settlement characterised by high incidences in some municipalities.

In fact well over half of the students have their homes in the quarters of three particular Municipalities located in the centre-east of Rome City: Municipio IX (San Giovanni), Municipio VII (Prenestino-Centocelle, Collatino) and Municipio V (Tiburtino, Pietralata, Casal Bruciato). Other urban areas that are marked by a significant presence are represented by Municipio I (Trastevere, Monti, Sallustiano, Esqui-

lino), Municipio II (Trieste-Salario, Flaminio) and Municipio III (San Lorenzo, Nomentano).

The students interviewed have a high level of mobility not only in reference to their studies but also with respect to their accommodation. In fact, more than half of the students had an experience of intra-urban mobility changing one or more houses since they arrived in Rome. The change of residence is linked to many different reasons that have to do with their life cycle and with functional and utilitarian reasons explained by the use of the concept of "place utility" (Brown, Moore 1970). This concept measures the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction that someone feels in living in a given place and helps to explain the spatial configuration of the territorial polarisation of Greek students. Where the usefulness of the place no longer meets their needs, there is a high chance they will change their housing situation and move into a new home. Over the years, using the multiple channels of information, the students interviewed are always active in seeking new and better housing opportunities driven by different reasons. First and foremost, is the need to find an apartment or a room in an urban area characterised by a network of connections better than where they had previously lived. Such reasoning is very closely linked to the space-time factor. The most central places located in the vicinity of their universities, friendships and workplace and reachable within a short time each day on foot or by public transport, are preferred. Thus we can say that trajectories, distance covered, duration and frequency of moving (Golini 2000) have redefined the geographical distribution of the Hellenic students.

> I lived in the Boccea quarter and it was not comfortable at all. Not because the prices have gone up. All you need to do is to put in an underground line and prices go up to like the centre. Now I live in the Sallustiano district. I'd rather live in a house in the city centre that maybe is not as nice as living in a lovely new house, even if far away. (Student of Law)

> I live in the San Paolo quarter. I have lived in four different areas: two years in San Lorenzo, one year near Piazza Vescovio, three years in Porta Portese and now one year here. San Lorenzo is very good for the first years of university life, Villa Ada is a residential and very green neighbourhood, Trastevere is in the centre and I had friends who lived near me and it is con-

venient to walk around if you do not have a car. Also here it's interesting, from an architectural point of view, because it is an area in transition. (Student of Architecture)

The urban mobility and change of residence are also determined by economic motivations, in the sense that the search for a room or an apartment is conducted on the basis of the cost of renting and their economic capabilities. Finally, there are also those who chose to move to areas considered the most peaceful and characterised by a greater degree of quality of life or those who chose to live in the home of their partner.

Mobility has almost always been intra-urban. Consequently, there were very few cases of "commuting students" who have left the town of Rome, moving toward the hinterland (Pavona, Mentana and Zagarolo) for family reasons or for a greater possibility to access the housing market in terms more favourable than in the capital.

For the students who did not experience any intra-urban mobility, the main motivation was to be the owners of the apartment where they live or stay with a relative (grandmother or uncle), accompanied by reasons related to the concept of "place utility" as the existing dwelling already meets their needs because they are well connected to places they usually visit and the university and because it is located in a place with a high degree of quality of life.

In reference to the type of accommodation, the majority of students interviewed live in a rented apartment. The remaining people live in their own apartment, with a relative, in the hall of residence or in a religious institute.

The search for a place to live is conducted using social capital. That is all the available channels they have, thus reducing costs in economic and psychological terms. The very first accommodation has generally been found through online housing advertisements but mostly thanks to the informal social network. That is through friends, family and people of Greek nationality who already lived in Rome. The social network was extremely useful even later, in seeking and moving to other homes. In this case, besides precious help from brokers who have lived in the capital for a long time, they use the support of new friendships made over the years, both Greek and Italian. In

fact, the more time spent in Rome entails a process of socialisation and familiarisation with the place where they live and allows many students to acquire the knowledge and tools necessary to better meet their needs, starting with their accommodation. The more time passes the more they go to live in apartments or rented rooms in neighbourhoods selected according to appropriate criteria and with more benchmarks for comparison. Often the advice on where to look, the information concerning the characteristics of some urban areas, and the effective use of "word of mouth", lead many students to find housing in neighbourhoods where there is already the presence of other Hellenic students. This thus triggers a sort of continuum of settlement which explains, in part, the phenomenon of territorial polarisation.

Regarding cohabitation, sharing an apartment for rent has always been the practice for many out of town students in general, and in our case of the Hellenic students. This is due largely to the Italian university organisation that can not ensure a sufficient number of accommodation units for all those in need. Thus, to avoid exorbitant rental costs and place much less burden on families, students rent apartments that they share with other peers. However this does not indicate problems related to overcrowding. Indeed, many students interviewed live with one person. Then there are cases of students who share an apartment with two people and, to a lesser extent, students who live with three or more people. Significant is the case that represents those who have decided to live alone, something quite unusual among the out of town students. And it is interesting to note that, among these, only one student lives in his own house. All others have rented an apartment located in well-off areas of Rome (Monti, San Giovanni, Flaminio).

A large part of the flatmates is represented by other peer students while the other people who share the apartment are family members or relatives (brothers, sisters, uncles, grandparents), partners or individuals who do not fall into these categories (workers or apartment owners).

We can say that, unlike past generations of Hellenic students who studied in Italy in the 60s-70s-80s of the last century, a period when there was a strong tendency to self-ghettoisation and cohabitation only with Greek students (Papoutsis, 1997), the main nationalities of the flatmates of our students is Italian. Greek nationality and dual citizen-

ship (Greek-Italian) follow. Finally, a minority of tenants are from other countries, both in Europe (Serbia, France, Ireland, Ukraine, Poland, Spain, Austria, Sweden, United Kingdom) and extra-European countries (United States, South Korea, Argentina).

2.9. Cost of living and rental costs: the family as the primary source of livelihood

In the last decade, the Roman housing market had witnessed an expansion greater than that of all other Italian cities, including in terms of rental prices of apartments (Comune di Roma, Dipartimento XV 2006). This has occurred partly as a result of liberalisation of rents (Law 431/1998) which eliminated the "fair rent" and increased rental costs.

Cohabitation not only allows sharing the expense for the rent, but also the condominium charges and other bills, reducing the economic burden on the students' families. Usually the price paid corresponds to that of a room in an apartment, which also includes shared services. In addition, the frequent practice of irregular "in black" rent has been denounced by several students interviewed. Another complaint concerns the distrust shown recently by some property owners in renting their apartments to Hellenic students. This new attitude is the result of the suspicion that the Greek economic crisis involves the breach of the lease payment and this leads them to demand high deposits or cash advances as security.

Obviously the rent varies according to the urban area. As we have seen, most people interviewed live in the central quarters such as San Giovanni, characterised by not easily accessible rents, and in areas farther from the centre that however have seen a sharp rise in rental costs or a reintroduction into the housing market because they are near universities (San Lorenzo, Nomentano).

A large number of students report that the cost of living is high in Rome. Of course this statement is also dependent on the economic status of their family, which regards more those who have a low status than those with medium-high status. However all agree that the high rental prices weigh heavily on the cost of living in Rome, especially

when compared with those of the Greek cities, including Athens.

> The rent is the most difficult expense to deal with here in Rome. Rental prices have risen so much. In 1996 I paid exactly half what I pay now. Once I lived in the Collatina quarter and then we moved to the Prenestina quarter. Fortunately I live near the restaurant where I work. We were a little lucky, at least for that. The cost of living in Rome is high, especially for rentals. For other expenses, such as the supermarket, it is much less. (Student of Engineering)

> The cost of living is high in Rome. The rent is very high. It's a real problem. The more the years go by, the more difficult it is to find rooms at an affordable price. When I arrived I paid 500,000 lire. Over time this increased, and moved from 250 euros to 500 euros. Now if someone asks for 500 euros you think it's a normal thing, that it's not expensive. (Student of Medicine)

> The cost of living here is high. For any out of town student the cost of living is high, especially for rents that increase more and more. In Athens, the rents are cheaper. In Patras you pay for a studio flat like you pay for a double room here! Even shopping at discount stores is becoming expensive. Then movies, cigarettes, to go out, they were eliminated long ago! (Student of Architecture)

The average monthly rental expenditure, including electricity and gas bills, amounts to 590 euros for each student. Obviously, in calculating this expense, one must take into account factors such as the urban area where the apartment is located, the number of individuals who live there and the degree of familiarity with the homeowner. Regarding the urban area, there are those who say, for example, that one month's rent (plus electricity and gas bills) amounts to 1000 euros for a room in an apartment in the Trastevere quarter shared with two other people. By contrast, those living in the most peripheral Torre Spaccata, face a much lower cost of 150 euros for a room. Also the number of people who share the flat affects the individual monthly spending. Those who decided to live alone obviously have a much higher economic burden than those who chose to cohabit. In fact, the average monthly expenditure of people living alone is equal to 980 euros (with a peak of 1600 euros for an apartment in the Flaminio area) compared to an average of 490 euros between those who share the rent of an

apartment with three or more persons. Finally, the relationship with the owner of the house can result in the reduction of rent. This is the case, for example, for some Greek-Italian students whose monthly fee is minimal or is reduced only to the condominium charges and the amounts of the bills because of a de facto relationship or friendship with the student-owner of the apartment.

Traditionally in Greece families support their children to complete their studies and often the parents face enormous economic sacrifices. It is true that there are no tuition fees, but the costs related to accommodation, meals and transportation are not inexpensive. For students who decide to continue their studies abroad, the economic burden on families becomes even more relevant, especially when the destination country is characterised by a higher cost of living. Many parents continue, even in a period of relatively long stay in Italy, to support their children incurring all their expenses (housing, food, university, personal expenses, etc.) and to keep alive the hope of seeing them complete their studies with the crowning of a long-awaited degree.

Consequently, the family represents the primary source of livelihood of the students interviewed. Work or a scholarship contribute to a much lesser extent. Very often the family is the only agent of livelihood, in the sense that it doesn't go along side either employment or other sources of income. In addition, the students who come from a family context characterised by a higher socio-economic status are more dependent on their parents unlike their peers who come from less well-off families who are forced to look for work in order to cope with the expenses or who are lucky enough to receive a scholarship.

2.10. Student-workers: forms of ethnicisation of the labour market

Among respondents there are some cases of students who are employed in reference to the current year. However, we must specify that often it is casual and temporary employment, more useful to meet personal expenses and more compatible to a university curriculum. In fact, many students, while claiming to have a job, do not however consider it as a real source of livelihood represented, as we have seen,

in large part by the family. There are few cases of those who work full time during the entire week and in the cases of those who do, they no longer receive financial help from their parents, and those who cope with their own costs depending solely on work, are even rarer.

The main jobs are those included in the field of service work and shop and market sales work (waiter, chef, tourist courier, shop assistant). Following, there are technicians and associate professionals (call centre operator, computer assistant, organiser of festivals, music DJ), intellectual professionals (translator, interpreter, an intern at an architectural firm) and clerks (hostesses for fairs and public events). To a lesser extent, unskilled workers (leafleting, baby sitter), entrepreneurs (family-owned hotel), and skilled agricultural and craft and related trade workers appear.

As described above, the student-workers have a generally lower socio-economic status than the average. In addition, there is not a prevalence as regards the gender while the average residence time in Italy is higher than the average of the total number of Hellenic students interviewed. Finally, a further observation is that some of the student-workers hold more than one job, some of which began several years ago.

A very important aspect that emerged from the students' stories is that frequently work found revolves around the Hellenic presence in Italy. In fact most of them found a job in the Greek restaurants, as a waiter, chef, musician or dancer. Others work occasionally as translators and interpreters at the Greek Embassy on the occasion of meetings and conferences or as a mediator in import-export businesses moving between Italy and Greece. Moreover, there are those who exploit the channel of tourism accompanying groups of Greek tourists in Rome or bringing Italian tourists to Greece to the family-owned hotel. Finally there is someone who works as a DJ at parties organised by Hellenic students. They are jobs done, in a direct or collateral way, within the informal Greek network in Rome and intended, referring to the Polanyi's concept of "embeddedness", almost as a kind of enclave embodied in a system of strong social ties and job opportunities.

In the specific case of those who have found employment in the restaurants, we can find some aspects related to forms of ethnicisation of the labour market. In effect the Greek restaurant represents a well-

defined employment niche characterise by a high concentration of people, mostly students, with the same national origin. In general, the presence of student-workers in restaurants as waiters is not a rare phenomenon in the city of Rome. This can be explained, in part, by the ease of finding such a job and by the possibility of working part-time. However, in our case, we observe an ethnically connoted place, where there is the almost exclusive presence of Greek staff and where specific skills are required, such as the knowledge of a perfect recipe for mousaka and the knowledge of traditional music to play during the weekend evenings. In fact, as stated by Ambrosini (2001, p. 89), the relative ease in finding a job in a certain environment produces a kind of colonisation «generating employment sectors that absorb the Greek workforce and thus become ethnically connoted places».

As already said, the searching for such a job takes place through the informal network, mostly using networks of family relationships and friendships which allow for a reduction in the human cost and time, as well as an acceleration in the job matching process, that is the match between demand and supply. As in the searching for a house, where mechanisms of solidarity and mutual aid are triggered, also in searching for employment does the informal network allow for an effective dissemination of information that facilitates access to the labour market.

> I work as a chef at the Greek restaurant "Egeo". I arrived there because when I came here on holiday, I lived in an apartment with other Greeks. Two of them worked at the "Egeo" and once, through them, I phoned the owner and I told him that I was looking for a job. So he employed me. I was able to cook because I learned from my grandfather who worked in a restaurant in Greece. (Student of Mathematical, Physical and Natural Sciences)

This is also true for the demand side because the network facilitates a saving of time in the selection and offers guarantees as regards the profile of potential employees and their ability to meet the expectations of the restaurant owners. Moreover, the Hellenic restaurants constitute a semi-institutional place where the students can meet up, exchange information about the university and strengthen their network system (Semi 2004). Finally, from a cultural point of view, the Greek restaurants are a symbolic transnationalist place where, as well as im-

porting food products from Greece, specific atmospheres are reconstructed and a series of cultural consumption and representations of national identity embodied in food, music and dance "ala elliniká" rises again.

2.11. Evaluation of citizens services and Hellenic networks

As well as the problem of high rents, the majority of students interviewed said that they are satisfied with the life they are living in Rome and services offered to citizens of the Capital (mobility, health, entertainment, culture, etc.). In fact, a large number of the students express a judgment equal to or greater than the sufficiency, according to their experience in the city of Rome.

The most appreciated aspects are those related to culture and art. As a historical city characterised by an extraordinary cultural and artistic heritage, Rome is seen as a cosmopolitan capital that attracts international tourists and offers a variety of cultural and artistic events not found in Greek cities, including Athens. The young Greek students, characterised by a relatively high level of mobility, identify in this city an ideal place to produce meetings and clashes of ideas, cultures and worldviews.

> Here I found things that there are not in Greece. For example, I really like classical music and here I find many concerts and theatres that I never found in Greece. Rome, as also Italy, offers a lot of things. I wandered around the town a lot to watch concerts. Athens is dead. In Greece I would have drunk coffee every day because Greek people don't have this culture. In Rome I move around quite well now, I'm fine. I could never live in a small town. Here in Rome you can do a lot of things. And in addition, as well as studying, I wanted to do other things, I wanted to live. But also now! (Student of Medicine)

> Services for citizens here are great! Everyone complains but they don't know what is worse. There are differences with Athens especially with regard to mobility and culture. Here a lot of events and art exhibitions are organised. They also advertise them on buses. While in Athens you must look for them. In fact, Greek young people who come here are not so used to going to art exhibitions and cultural events. A few days ago I went to a wonderful confer-

ence about the poet Elitis, that I found in the Greek newspaper "To Vima" on the internet and there were no other young people there. This means that the Greeks in general, not just the young, are not used to this. They think it is a thing for old people. They don't have this stimulus and this sensitivity. Everything starts from the school as when you are a child and you are not educated to be stimulated to look at things differently. The only thing young Greeks care about is going to the disco to have fun, nothing else. One who comes to Rome doesn't know where to start because there are so many thing to do. (Student of Architecture)

Obviously, as for the evaluation of university structures, some critical aspects also emerge. The main problems and defects are identified in the public transport system, also for those who generally express a positive opinion on citizens services, and a greater depersonalisation/dispersion with respect to places of origin, especially for those coming from Athens. Finally, some students who come from the Hellenic capital and Thessaloniki complain about the negative aspects related to night life fun such as, for example, the restriction applied to the local sale and consumption of alcoholic drinks in public areas of different quarters of Rome.

Regarding mobility in Rome, with only two metro lines, one poorly functioning and a third one that they haven't finished yet, it's too little. Even in Athens transport didn't work well. It was also a cultural problem because people in Greece attach great importance to cars and then after the Olympic Games everything has changed. In Athens the metro reaches everywhere, new quarters are born, the buses have improved. In Athens we have more fun in the evening. We are a bit like Spanish people. We are used to always finding something open, until about 4am or 5am. And you were safe to walk. But it's much more pleasant to walk in Rome, to go and get a coffee along the Tevere river or at the "Zodiac Bar". (Student of Medicine)

Here there is a lot more traffic, more than Athens! In the early years, taking the means of transport was absurd! When I lived in the Casal Bertone quarter, as the crow flies, I was close to the university. But I had to take two buses and then to walk a quarter of an hour. On the whole it took an hour to get to university with all the crushed people on the bus! (Student of Psychology)

Persons interviewed were asked how they relate to the Hellenic institutions in Rome and what their level of information and participa-

tion in Greek formal or informal activities and events is. None is a member of any properly structured association or institution, except in three unique cases of student members of the "Hellenic Community of Rome and Lazio".

Regarding the participation in events that revolve around the Hellenic presence in Rome, the stories reveal a great heterogeneity. However, we can identify two groups.

The first group consists of students who show a certain involvement in the Greek initiatives taking place in Rome, even if with irregular attendance. These are almost always informal events such as parties organised, albeit less frequently than in the past, by students at some club or disco, or parties involving Greek music and folk dances coordinated by informal associations. The initiatives promoted by the Hellenic institutions (embassy, "Hellenic Community of Rome and Lazio", Greek-orthodox church) are of lesser interest.

> Except for parties at some discos in the Flaminio quarter or Piazza Fiume, where we took many Italian friends to let them know Greek culture and customs, I participate in the "Evi Evan" and "Opa Opa" evenings at the Greek restaurant where I work. I also do the advertising, I send people to them. Then I go to the conferences about Mount Athos that are organised every year and where there is the representative who is from Mount Athos. The Franciscan fathers are also baptised for becoming orthodox . In this conference, I work as an interpreter for the monk who represents the whole Mount Athos community. (Student of Medicine)

> I was one of the organisers of the Greek parties at Alien Disco. I was the representative of the last two, instead of another person. We always went! Now there are not that many people because the party has lost its prestige. It is no longer much fun and the drinks are overpriced. And then some students fought twice last year. (Student of Medicine)

> I'm a member of the Hellenic Community as a musician. I go to the festivals, exhibitions, book presentations... I play the violin. I also play traditional music. I was a member of a traditional music group called "Mantila". We were two Greeks and the others were Italian. I taught the other musicians how to play in the Greek way. Since 2006 I've been also playing at the Greek restaurant. Now I want to create a well-structured traditional music group which organises shows with dances. I can play everything. I think it's something that can work well. I have to find the strength and time to organise it

well.. I wander around all the Hellenic communities in Italy and I see that there is demand and curiosity. And I'd go with this group to Greece, where they can say "What a fine job they have done abroad!". (Student of Medicine)

I have many Greek friends with whom I also study. Here there are many Cretans and with them sometimes, when there is a saint's day, we meet and celebrate it. Sometimes I went to some student parties. Now they no longer have parties because we are few and there were even fights. Sometimes I go to the Greek restaurant in the Casilina and Trastevere quarters. I go to church at Easter and for festivities. (Student of Medicine)

As regards this group of students, we can observe the existence of a social network that allows socio-cultural identification. Being among other Greek students, organising evenings in the clubs, celebrating their name day listening to Greek music at home, celebrating Easter and New Year with the "Hellenic Community of Rome and Lazio" lead to, consequently, a process of strengthening their cultural identity and sense of belonging. Thus, this common feeling fills the gap created by distance from their country, from family and other significant social relationships. Attending events and using socio-cultural products symbolically recalls their place of origin, allowing a connection or reconnection to their cultural heritage, helping overcome homesickness. The symbolic geography of the homeland is materialised, thus creating a new cultural geography. Furthermore, gathering at the San Teodoro Church in Rome to celebrate the Orthodox festivities is a good opportunity to meet other Greek students, at least those who have not returned home for the holidays. Also, by meeting together every day at the "A. Rossi Fanelli Library " in the Department of Biochemical Sciences and the "Marta Russo Reading Room" at the Sapienza University, the privileged place of study for students of Medicine, strengthens the sense of solidarity and complicity among students.

The second group consists of students who instead, since they have been in Rome, have never participated in any promoted Greek initiative. This lack of adhesion is mostly due to a lack of curiosity and will to search for information on any type of event or due to a complaint about the poor organisation and fragmentation of the Hellenic institu-

tions. In this regard, some students criticised the institutions because they are not attentive to the Greek student presence and they are too focused on themselves. This has lead to them being closed to students and to a lack of a bridge with the young students.

> I do not know Greek communities here. I'm not well informed and I don't even know if I can be enrolled in them or if only the residents can. But I can say that they don't help anyone and this is a problem. All of them are closed, even the embassy and the consulate. I've been at the church where there are a lot of people of the Hellenic community and they see you as a student, as a temporary thing. They could do something. I know that in other embassies, such as the Cypriot embassy, they organise concerts, theatre performances, cultural activities. Things that our embassy never does. Many students complain about this. We are alone here ... (Student of Medicine)

Within this group, several people interviewed have been critical towards the concept of "Greekness", meant as an organic, homogeneous and fixed entity and built around notions such as Greek ethnos, Greek State and Greek Orthodox Church. These students say that, during their entire stay in Rome, they have never felt a need for "Greekness" embodied in the search for others of the same nationality with whom they can establish relations of friendship, collect information on socio-cultural Hellenic initiatives, participate in a party organised by the Greek students, and so on. Often, following the advice of a brother, a sister or a friend who came to study in Italy before them, or the many stories heard in Greece on past experiences of Hellenic students in Italy, they have used an anticipatory socialisation that is very effective in warning them against the risks of ghettoisation. The desire to learn or improve the Italian language in a short time and the firm intention of full integration into the society of destination drove them to stop or avoid other social relationships with persons of Greek nationality and to socialise more with those of Italian nationality.

> I'm not part of any group or the Greek community. Why? Do they exist? I don't know them... I don't participate in any events. I just go to the Greek church occasionally, at Easter and Christmas. At first the feeling for Greece was very strong in a way that, when you don't know the language and the place where you are, it's very difficult to adapt. Also going to the supermarket becomes impossible. So you need to interact with people from the same

country. But, in my experience, you have to be careful because it takes you away from studies. Because, in my personal experience, I met Greeks who thought only of making a mess and not studying. From the beginning, I tried to remove everything that was taking me away from my path of study. It's not that I started with the assumption that I should not make Greek friends. However, when these friendships did not allow me to study, I removed them from my life. And then friendships with Italians allowed me to achieve my objectives in a better way. It's not that my friendship with the Greeks created obstacles for me but friendships with Italians put me on a shorter path, even for the language. For this reason, I learned Italian soon. I realised that, instead of trying to talk to the Greeks, I could find people to speak Italian with. (Student of Engineering)

I don't participate in Greek events. All I know is that they organise evenings in a disco in Piazza Fiume. I do not care because then it becomes a very closed community: the majority of Greeks who are at my faculty don't speak with anyone, they are always together, they never go out, they listen to Greek music, they drink Greek coffee. It's all Greek! And I don't like it. It is as if there's no Italy here! Now that I'm in Italy, it's better to know and experience Italy. I don't go in search of Greekness. (Student of Architecture)

My sister who came to Italy before me was one of the people that helped me the most. She always said to me not to go out with the Greeks, not to go to Greek parties. She told me to see what the city offered. It was one of the best pieces of advice I have ever had. (Student of Psychology)

2.12. Mobile identities and social spaces: a transnational and dynamist interpretation

The issue of the participation of Greek students in the Hellenic events and initiatives has certainly to do with the process of building their cultural and social identity. However, let us reflect on the mechanisms of this process by adopting a transnational and dynamist interpretation within a socio-anthropological perspective.

The students interviewed felt in many ways as: "European citizens", "cosmopolitan citizens", "Mediterranean citizens", "Greek citizens", "immigrant students", "Italianised Greeks", "Italo-Greeks", "Italian-Greeks", "Greeks with Italian roots".

I don't feel foreign in the sense of saying "I am Greek. You're Italian". In the end, I think we are all part of an exchange of ideas and cultural elements. I feel, if anything, more like a European citizen. I wouldn't say a migrant. (Student of Architecture)

I have my doubts about the European Union as it is now. I feel more like a Greek and Mediterranean citizen. Because there's a difference between the Northern and Southern European citizens. We are very different. (Student of Engineering)

I feel Italian-Greek. It's an interesting thing to have these two identities. Although certainly I know much more of Greece than Italy. But I have always felt between the two. (Student of Communication Sciences)

Many of them claim that this process of perception of culture and citizenship has changed over the years: for some the experience of transnational mobility has produced a European identity as citizens of the European Union. For others the distance from their home country has strengthened their national identity often flowing into nationalism that they had not in Greece. For others living in Italy has weakened or has completely changed their sense of Greekness. Thus, we observe a process of self-identification of a dense set of forms of citizenship and cultural identities — single, double, multiple or supranational — that often go beyond the perimeter of Nation-states, producing new configurations (Bosniak 2001).

The first year I felt more Greek. Now I feel more Italian having lived in Italy and taken on Italian cultural elements. I am very happy with the Italians, I like them. It's not that I don't need to go out, talk and have a conversation with another Greek. I go out with the Greeks, but I prefer the Italian lifestyle, to see a movie or a theatre performance in Italian, to eat Italian food, because otherwise it makes no sense to come and study here. (Student of Engineering)

At first I was very homesick for my culture and I looked for it a lot. In Greece I never had a sense of nationalism. Instead, coming here, which is ironic, because my family background had nothing to do with being nationalistic, I became nationalistic. Even with some friends, we thought of leaving and returning to Greece. But then the city and the people were very welcoming. Now there's always the feeling of love for my country but I try to be more objective and to understand the negative aspects, without idealising and deifying. Because many Greeks make fun of the Italian ways. (Student of Ar-

chitecture)

Culture, as a sphere of attribution of socially shared meanings, is permanently inside a process of construction, deconstruction and reconstruction. This means that there are no cultures ontologically immutable, fixed, rigid or static. In a globalised world characterised by technological revolution as well as rapid and massive flows of information, goods and people, it is not sustainable to speak of natural and cultural units. It is more accurate to speak of continuity and discontinuity processes that make the culture fluid, dynamic and syncretic (Amselle 1990). As Pompeo says, «culture is not an immutable entity passed once and for all through the generations. Rather it is a historical product. That is, it is a construction inscribed within a given context and as a product of concrete social groups» (Pompeo 2002, p. 75). Thus, cultural identity is not given once and for all and no one can speak of identity in itself. Rather, it is always in relation with the "other". Alluding not so much to lifestyles and practices present in a particular group, but rather the meanings ascribed to such practices, cultural identity experiences a continuous process of transculturalism (Basch, Glick Schiller, Szanton Blanc 1994; Appadurai 1996; Hannerz 1996; Vertovec, Cohen 1999). The plot of these meanings is the result of complex interactions that launch the construction and representation of cultural identities that individuals use to make sense of their place in the world. Identity is well constructed and reconstructed through a series of social exchanges and relationship systems, where not only is the "local identity" fundamental but also the identity that an individual has with that place or those places within a bi-directional relationship between the country of departure and destination.

Because of its multi-dimensional and dynamic nature, it is difficult to contain identity because it undergoes changes, reformulations and manipulations. This discontinuous component allows the use of identity strategies. From a situational view point, the Hellenic students often use these strategies through which the identity is constructed in relation to others. This means that, according to circumstances and the interlocutor, they confirm or transform the boundaries of their group — what Barth calls "ethnic borders" (1969) — understood as a social

construction and as a communication mode that limits and at the same promotes the interaction. In fact, the students define their sense of belonging according to the person they are facing and the context of communication. An example could be when a student from Rhodes simply says he is "Greek" talking with an Italian or, rather, "Roditis" (Rodian) in front of a student from Athens. The assertion of identity is thus equivalent to defining a principle of discrimination against "others" and building a border that expands and contracts depending on the context. They are all mechanisms that are created using the principles of social differentiation and on whose membership it is based.

The dynamic and complex nature of cultural identity emerges strongly in reference to the students who are children of mixed couples. In effect, more than ever, we see a process of identity construction characterised by a multi-dimensional nature based on a discontinuous line of double and multiple identities. In fact, the Italo-Greek students do not perceive their dual sense of belonging as a temporary condition pending stabilisation (Scidà 1999). They participate in different cultures and create, with different materials produced in specific situations, their personal identities and combine them syncretically. Even the term "Italo-Greek" (hyphenated) assumes a hybridity that occurs when, in a mutual way and in relation to different contexts or periods, they say to feel "a little more Greek" in Italy, "a little more Italian" in Greece and "Italo-Greek" in another country. Also in this case the identity appears as a strategy to achieve a goal when, in this construction process, the students are not completely passive and, echoing the words of Ambrosini «dual citizenship crosses the world organised into Nation-states, institutionalising the crossing boundaries and overlap of social and symbolic ties» between Italy and Greece (Ambrosini 2008, p. 64). It is also interesting to note how the identity of the Italo-Greek students turns out to be a compromise between self-identity and hetero-identity. In effect, many respondents talk of the process of labelling towards them: when they lived in Greece they were often called "Italian" while on the contrary, in Italy they are labelled as "Greek". This labelling does not always coincide with the self-perception. On the contrary, often self-identity is in a dialectical relation with the process of cultural categorisation, that is the imposition of identity from the outside (Fabietti 2003, p. 138) producing, ac-

cording to the individual, a double presence or a double absence. In the case of double absence, embodied in feeling neither "Greek" nor "Italian", some students say that they have experienced a sense of disorientation that implies a difficulty of immediate access to a defined identity and that drives them to review their boundaries and thus to develop new forms of identity.

Culturally, I feel that I am neither Greek nor Italian! I don't feel Italian because I don't know a large chunk of the history of Italy, or phrases, idioms, geographical places. And the same thing happens in Greece because I left when I was 18 and the moment you start to have a full understanding of your country is over 18 years of age. When I am in Greece they call me "the Italian" and when I'm here they call me "the Greek". When I'm here I feel more Greek and when I'm there I feel more Italian. It is also a bit sad because many times I realise that I don't know many things, because as I said before, I would have learned many more things about Greece from 18 years of age. Because after you start you really understand things such as political, historiographical, sociological and geographical events and situations. There was a sort of detachment. So I have a half Greek and half Italian consciousness. It happens that when I am in Greece and they ask me a question about Italy I'm not able to answer. And the same happens here in Italy when they ask me a question about Greece and this hurts me a lot. Because here I'm identified not with the city where I come from, Volos, but with the whole of Greece. When I'm in Volos I don't say "We, Greeks" because I'm very critical of Volos and Greece and not using "We, Greeks" is already a strategy, a critical first step. When I say "We", and in one case or another, it doesn't mean Italians or Greeks, but it means "We who live in". (Student of Letters and Philosophy)

I have never felt accepted in the Greek community, nor have my sisters. I don't know why, or if it's because I'm half Italian and half Greek, or because we have had relationships with people of other nationalities. Dual citizenship is both good and bad. You are more open to the world but you don't feel neither Greek nor Italian. There are moments that I don't feel Italian and moments that I don't feel Greek. When I'm in Italy I feel more Greek, when I'm in Greece more Italian. In Greece they call me "the Italian" and here they call me "the Greek". Here I feel the need to search for Greek culture. But I'm not satisfied with the kind of life that the Greeks have here. Because they stay all day talking about "Aris" and "Olimpiakos", they don't speak Italian, they are ghettoised. When I feel this absence, I try to find the Greek culture elsewhere: on the internet or going out with Greek friends with whom I feel better around. The phrase "one face, one race" is not true, is a false stereotype. Many people say to me this phrase. When I'm in Greece and they realise that

I'm also Italian they say to me "Italian, one face one race". And I have to explain that it's not exactly like that. Surely there is something that ties us as Mediterraneans, but when we talk about customs, habits, character, fun, food, the way we dress, we are different. It is one of the reasons for the ghettoisation of the Greeks, perhaps. Now that I have said "We are different" I consider myself Greek, perhaps because we are in Italy. If we were in Greece I would've said the opposite. (Student of Letters and Philosophy)

Already in the past, Hellenic students in Italy had social ties with their country of origin (Papoutsis 1997). In the 60s-70s and 80s of the last century the main means that allowed communication with families and friends in Greece was represented by post and the public telephone. These modes of communication could present some problems and often entire weeks or months passed before families had news of their loved ones living in Italy and of their curriculum. Trips aimed at visiting family and friends or resolving personal issues in Greece were not very frequent because of the enormous cost of a flight and the significant complexity of the journey by means such as train, bus or ship.

Today, new forms of human mobility allow for a higher intensity, extent and velocity of social exchanges. The spread of the Internet, computer softwares, cheap flights and satellite TV has undoubtedly facilitated the modes and level of communication by reducing geographical and temporal distances, enabling them to maintain social ties more frequently and more consistently than before.

The interviewed students make great use of all these media and, with some regularity and continuity, go to Greece for short or medium-term periods, during holidays (Christmas and Easter), for summer holidays or for other reasons after passing a university exam.

Low cost flights offset the distance from home and ease the moving. The most frequent direct air route is Rome-Athens, given the high number of Athenian students in our target population. Other direct low cost flights, recently introduced in the airline traffic, are those linking the Italian capital with the other Greek cities such as Thessaloniki, Volos and Rhodes. Travelling by land or sea are very rare and it is mainly students from the Ionian Islands who are used to travelling by ship mainly due to the absence of direct flights.

The visits are not uni-directional, meaning that students do not only

move to keep the relationship with their loved ones alive. All respondents say that they receive constant visits from Greece, especially from friends and family, followed by other relatives and their partners. The parents come to visit them because they want to ensure that living conditions are optimal for their children and that their studies continue in a positive way. It is interesting to note that some life stories reveal cases of "dislocation of emotional relations" (Parreñas 2001) and of family care at a distance. In fact, in the absence of living with their children, very often the mothers of the students worry about their diet. This is done, most of the time, through the preparing of homemade food given to children during the reciprocal visits. Thus, food acquires the value of a gift and takes on a significance that goes beyond the food itself. Experienced as a kind of ritual, the careful preparation of *dolmádes* (stuffed vine leaves), *keftedákia* (meatballs) or *baklavádes* (sweets made of sugar, honey and dried fruit) fills the void left by their children in the house, reduces family distances and contains the memories of time spent together.

Equipped with technological know how, people interviewed use all manner of technology such as the internet, computers, software ("skype"), webcams, smarthphones and all means which allow for audio-visual communication in real time with friends and family both in Italy and Greece. By internet they read the main Greek daily newspapers or online news portals such as "H Kathimeriní", "To Víma", "Ta Néa", "Tromaktikó", "Elefterotipía", as well as Italian and international ones ("BBC", "CNN") from which they collect information on what is happening in Greece. Some even have satellite TV in their homes that gives them the feeling of being in Greece while staying in Italy. A large number are enrolled in many social networks on the internet, some of which are specifically relevant to the Hellenic students in Italy who are also the founders. Among these there are a multitude of Facebook groups like "Greek Students@University of Rome La Sapienza", "Énosi Ellínon Foititón Iatrikís Tor Vergata" ("Union of Greek Students of Medicine, Tor Vergata"), "Éllines Foitités kai Néoi sti Rómi" ("Greek Students and Youth in Rome"), "KEFI – Kéntro Ellínon Foitión Italías" ("Centre of Greek Students in Italy"), "Neoellinikós Sílogos Foititón Italías - NE.SFI" ("Neo-Greek Association of Students in Italy"), "Éllines tis Italías" ("Greeks of Italy").

    Frequent travel between Italy and Greece and the constant use of all means of communication described above give us interesting stimulus for reflection following a transnationalist perspective.

    As we have seen, the students interviewed, despite the physical distance, continue to maintain social ties with those who live in Greece, in the sense that their social life doesn't end nor transfer completely to the destination country. Going beyond the national boundaries they build «social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement» (Glick Schiller, Basch, Szanton Blanc 1992). By doing such they can participate simultaneously in the life of both countries as trans-migrants who weave old and new social relations across national borders while maintaining a link between the two shores of the Mediterranean. This is clearly visible when we observe the case of students who are also business people in a family-owned hotel. Indeed, through the internet and Facebook, they advertise vacation packages mobilising all their contacts and involving Italian and Greek groups of friends acquired in Rome. These are bi-directional activities and practices that transcend national boundaries connecting different social and economic spaces. Significant is also the case of family reunification where some students engage in a process of anticipatory socialisation with their brothers and sisters who want to come and study in Italy, providing them with information and advice they need to develop a migration plan. In fact, these students create "transnational social spaces" (Faist 2000), bonds of reciprocity and solidarity that make «two Nation-states a single social space in which ― together with the people ― ideas, symbols and material culture circulate» (Ambrosini 2008, p. 48). The circulation of new ideas, values and internalised norms can thus contribute to the creation of "social remittances" that students spread within these transnational spaces (Levitt 2001). No longer considered as "up-rooted" (assimilationist perspective) or as "transplanted" (multiculturalist perspective) but rather as "translated", Hellenic students spread new translations of socio-cultural codes, behaviours, values and practices between the two shores.

    The reduction in transport and communication costs involves a restructuring of patterns of behaviour and offers the opportunity to be "here and there" at the same time while leading a dual life, living in

two different countries, speaking both Italian and Greek and having a continuous and regular series of ties across national borders (Portes, Guarnizo, Landolt 1999).

All Facebook groups constituted by Hellenic students, but in which also their friends and family who live in Greece participate, are an expression of a mass media transnationalism that transcends national geographic space through virtual communities, but real at the same time because they are made of relations "in the flesh". Using an Appadurai's term, we can observe a "community of feeling" (1996, p. 8). That being, a community that shares a feeling and a joint action due to the collective experiences lived between the two shores and that provide "a sense of crossing time and space which in turn contributes to give a perception of intimate connection" (Wilding 2006, p. 138). The online forums and social networks contribute in creating the perpetuation and the reproducibility of Hellenic student mobility since they can also offer a continuous flow of information and contacts useful to potential students, regarding the general conditions of life in Rome, courses and programs of study at their universities and so on. Thus, some Greek students, present in Italy for a long time, become brokers and "social ambassadors" for newcomers, or even "community leaders" because they are promoters of student parties or spokespeople on solidarity and awareness campaigns and or initiatives on the Greek economic crisis. In this regard, their ability to look at the economic crisis in Greece from a distance, through the use of online tools, makes the crisis a transnational phenomenon that tends to eradicate the separation between domestic and foreign politics. In this sense, the crisis travels virtually beyond Greek and Italian national borders becoming a case of globalisation of domestic politics.

2.13. The uncertainty of the future: Ulysses undecided

Students were asked what they plan to do after acquiring their degree. A large number would like to continue their training, while a minority are not willing to continue their studies or have not yet made a decision.

In reference to those who would continue to study, the new curricu-

lum they want to take is often linked to their type of degree, subject area and faculty.

Some respondents indicated that they wanted to continue with a "corso di specializzazione" (post-graduate course) and this primarily regards students enrolled in medicine. A further number of students would acquire an additional degree. This regards mostly students enrolled in a "laurea di primo livello" (bachelor degree) who want to continue with a post-graduate degree. This choice is across the board in all disciplinary areas and faculties (architecture, engineering, law, economics, letters and philosophy, communication sciences, psychology, mathematical, physical and natural sciences).

Some students said they would continue their studies by enrolling in a masters. It is both those who are studying for a "laurea di primo livello", and therefore do not intend to continue with a post-graduate degree, and those students enrolled in a "corso di laurea magistrale" (2nd degree) or a "corso di laurea magistrale a ciclo unico" (five/six-year Masters degree) who are oriented towards enrolment in a "master di II livello" (second level masters). The faculties involved are especially those belonging to the humanities (letters and philosophy) and, thereafter, psychology, architecture, engineering, pharmacology and inter-faculty.

A few respondents would like to continue their studies by doing a PhD. These are primarily students of three faculties (letters and philosophy, mathematical, physical and natural sciences, and architecture) and of course students attending a "corso di laurea magistrale" (2nd degree or five/six-year Masters degree). A small minority are willing to continue with a "corso di perfezionamento" (specialisation course) which concerns mainly students of architecture enrolled in a "corso di laurea magistrale" (2nd degree or five/six-year Masters degree). Other students interviewed said they would seek employment after acquiring their degree. This does not necessarily mean interrupting their educational path. In fact many of these students would like to seek employment and to continue their studies at the same time, almost always with a "master di I livello" or "master di II livello". This decision is across the board in all types of degree courses, subject areas and faculties (architecture, engineering, pharmacology, economics, letters and philosophy, medicine, psychology, mathematical,

physical and natural sciences).

Finally, a few respondents were not able to answer, not knowing yet whether to continue or conclude their training after obtaining the degree. These are students enrolled mainly in the humanities (letters and philosophy) and thereafter architecture and economics. This indecision crosses all degree courses and does not regard exclusively students recently enrolled at the university whose choice could be premature.

As for those who, once having obtained a university degree, are not willing to continue their studies, some common characteristics emerge. Firstly, they are students with an average age and average time spent in Italy higher than the total number of students surveyed (respectively 29 vs. 27 years and 9 vs. 6 years). Many have not finished their studies in the prescribed time and have not very high average exam marks. A large part already have a job but would like to find one more appropriate to their training. Finally, the faculties are those included in the area of health (pharmacology and medicine) and in the scientific-technological area (engineering, architecture, mathematical, physical and natural sciences) while, for what concerns the type of degree course, almost all are students of the "vecchio ordinamento" (old university regulation) and, thereafter, of a "corso di laurea magistrale".

For the students interviewed the last question of the questionnaire, through which they were asked whether they wish to return permanently to Greece, was considered the toughest. This emerged from the long silence that often followed the question and uncertainty in giving a definite answer.

Overall, a large number of people surveyed said they would return to Greece. Afterwards, there are those who were not able to answer while other student said that, among their life projects, there will be no return home.

The majority of the students foresee, therefore, their future in Greece. However, half of this component is not able to indicate the period of their return. Nearly half, instead, plan to return after obtaining a degree while only an insignificant number say they would return before finishing their studies.

Those who say they are planning to return immediately after ac-

quiring their degree are well aware of the critical situation they will find in Greece. However, they are confident of a possible change and from their life stories emerges a sense of optimism and hope. Many of them consider the experience of studying in Italy as a great investment in training and as an opportunity to spend their human and cultural capital in Greece. Others, recognising a certain prestige in having an Italian academic degree, want to contribute to the improvement of the Hellenic society and to the economic recovery because of the scientific knowledge acquired in Italy. That is, according to the theories of the brain circulation and brain gain, the possibility to start virtuous circles that would entail a positive impact on the Greek economy and an advantage in social terms.

Go back to Greece? Now you put me in a difficult position. I'll have to have 5000 coffees to give you an answer! The reality is that I want to return after my studies. Also because I have to do military service. I hope to finish this year. The project is to return and build a life and, if there are no opportunities, I'll leave again. Maybe I'll see that everything is shit and I'll go back to Italy, to Rome, because I'm almost a Roman citizen. Why should I try another country and another city? I couldn't do it. After so many years here! In Greece, if the employer realises that you have studied in Italy, it makes a difference. It's very impressive. With a degree in engineering I will have job opportunities, although in Greece everyone thinks that civil engineers deal with only construction of houses. I have already received a job offer from a university assistant who works in his teacher's company, related to airport transportation. But I think I won't accept because it's too theoretical. (Student of Engineering)

After my studies I want to go back to Greece. Before I didn't want to, because here I was fine, working, earning much and having all my friends. Maybe I could go back later. But not now. It's just the crisis that makes our lives difficult, but the crisis is here too. Most likely we're going to Rhodes. In Rhodes there is more quality of life, chance to work. I can open a pharmacy and my husband will not start from scratch because I have a very big family and he already has his patients. In Athens he would be nothing. And then in Rhodes the crisis is less, thanks to the tourism. I think the crisis will pass because it's just political. In my opinion, our lives will remain the same. Of course things have changed now in Greece. For example, a friend of mine who studied veterinary medicine in Bologna, went to Greece and can not find work. Before it was easier because the bank gave you a loan for the office. But now she's been waiting for three months and the bank hasn't given her it.

(Student of Pharmacology)

> Italy will have a deadline for me because I want to go back to Greece. After the degree I would like to find work and also to find a job as a theatre actor. For now my plan is to graduate. Then, there are things I want to do. I would like to have a family and children while I'm still young and at the same time I want to practice my profession and to help people. The pharmacy is the first stop that people have with the general health sector. I want to help the people who come into my pharmacy, telling them how to eat and live better, follow the right way to do the right tests. I want to participate in this movement to change things. I miss Greece. Especially now that the country needs new ideas. I'm sure that, only after a great catastrophe, people will begin to reason and to rebuild all. Unfortunately the human species is like that only when there is fear. The ancient Greeks had a sacred word that is *isterofimia*, which means "I care what I will leave, what they will remember of me after my death and I do not want that they remember me as a lying and disgusting person. I want that they remember me for eternity, I want to reach eternity". (Student of Pharmacology)

In addition, the distance from the motherland has given them the opportunity to have a more objectivity useful to bring benefits to their country. For some students, this positive view depends on the existence of concrete job opportunities and a favourable situation in Greece. This is the case for those who have already started a job in the country of origin (hotel owners) or those who have the possibility of converting their social capital into economic and professional capital, because they have followed in the footsteps of their parents by taking a similar training path and having a guaranteed job (holders of a doctor's surgery or pharmacy, builders and owners of an architectural firm).

> After graduation I think I'll return to Greece. I hope to finish in three years. Although it is not easy at all to work there. In Greece politicians are awful because they don't promote culture. Once there was culture but now it's gone. But I think everyone wants to return to their country. I wouldn't stay in Italy not in your life! One would rather go to Germany, America, Sweden or Canada. Not Italy, where you get 700-800 euro in a temporary job and, if you want to have a family, you have to wait for 50 years. In Greece we see people who marry before 30. You don't see this in Italy because you can't have a steady job with a permanent contract. You live always under stress and you don't know if you will continue to work. And you are forced

to live in a rented apartment forever. Of course I can work with my father, for that I feel lucky. My father is waiting for me and always asks me when I'll finish university, because he is getting old! But first I have to do military service, so I hope that in 4 years I'll start working. (Student of Mathematical, Physical and Natural Sciences)

Other factors that push them back to Greece are the feeling of homesickness, ongoing and maintained meaningful social relationships (family, friends, partners), the lower cost of living in Greece compared to the high economic costs in Italy, especially when parents are no longer willing or able to keep them, the obligation to do military service after their studies, the sense of rejecting life in Italy due to too many long years of residence and, finally, the desire to build a life and a family in Greece.

After finishing my studies I'll go back to Greece. I want to go because my parents can't keep me any more. I'll do it more for them than for me. Since I am engaged but not, as you say in Italy, with the ring. Anyway, I have a boyfriend in Greece and if I want this relationship to go well I'll have also to think about him, at a distance ... For this reason I'm thinking whether to continue the "laurea magistrale" here or in Greece. Once I considered staying in Italy but now that I'm with somebody. I've changed my plan. He wants to come here. He likes Italy. But he doesn't know the language and then he works there. (Student of Law)

After graduation I would like to specialise in paediatrics in Greece. This specialisation doesn't exist in Igoumenitsa, so I should go elsewhere. But most likely I see myself as a doctor in Igoumenitsa. We are experiencing a very "fluid" situation, so I'm ready for any radical changes. I would like to work also with my father who is a paediatrician. Sometimes I thought of another country, but it has always stayed in a little corner of my mind and has never materialised in a concrete way. I have no positive vision for the future of Greece. The situation is rather grim. The desire to return to Greece seems a bit paradoxical but I left when I was 17 and, in all these years, there has always been the desire to return to my family, to stay in a more geographically human place. They are therefore more family than economic reasons. (Student of Medicine)

After finishing my studies, I want to go back to Greece. I want to wander around a bit but then I want to go back to Greece. How do you leave Crete?

It's hard! The love I have for my country hasn't changed! I always enjoy coming back. In the near future, I want to get my degree. By this year. After graduation I will return to Greece because I have to do military service. After graduation I want to specialise in orthopaedics. Between Italy and Greece there is a difference in organisation. Here every "corso di specializzazione" has a competitive examination. Instead, in Greece, there is a ranking based on your age, when you have finished your studies, examination marks... You have the opportunity to indicate two or three hospitals in Greece and you have to wait between 4 to 8 years. Here you have to take exams and they said to me that you need high marks, lots of experience and someone who can help you. But I'm not able to say if this is true for sure because I haven't had the experience. I would like to be a doctor in Crete. But I don't know where the future will lead me in the sense that, from what I've been reading in the last days, many hospitals are closing in Greece. There is a lot of difficulty as regards the funds dedicated to health. So in three years, after I finish the specialisation, the number of funds will be greatly diminished and maybe I will be forced to go abroad again. Maybe to Germany, because in Italy, as in Greece, you need a recommendation. I don't know if I would come back here. (Student of Medicine)

After graduation I want to return to Crete to do a specialisation. Sure! I still don't know yet what kind of specialisation. Because in Greece you have to wait so many years. I will choose based on waiting time and needs. I'm 31. What am I waiting for?! I want to return because I'm from Crete! A Cretan, when he goes out of Crete, is like a fish out of water: he can't breathe! People who come from Athens or Thessaloniki feel good out of their city but I don't like big cities. (Student of Medicine)

As for the many students who are unable to define the period of return to their country, we could use the Ulysses metaphor. Just as the Homeric hero, the students interviewed during their long absence are identified in their "Ithaca" keeping the connection with their native land alive, and always thinking about a possible return. But unlike Odysseus, though personifying the curiosity, the thirst for knowledge and overcoming many obstacles, they show a strong indecision on the period of return, or even bring a possible return into serious question. This indecision has been further strengthened over the past two years due to the socio-economic crisis that Greece is experiencing. In effect, many students said they had considered the study period in Italy as a moment of passage, almost liminal, with the certainty of a return to

Greece after having completed their studies. These projects, with the onset of the crisis, have been changed in the sense that they still want to go back but they don't know when to go back. Thus, the original objectives slowly dissolve or, however, are revised and replaced by new more vague and transient plannings. In fact, though the intention to return remains, life projects are still open and long term. However, almost all students think that it is very important to have further training or professional experiences before returning to their homeland. There are those who would like to continue their studies with a "scuola di specializzazione", "master" and PhD, or who are thinking of travelling and finding a job related to their training in Italy or in another country (England, Germany, Holland, France, Scotland, Switzerland, Spain and the United States). For other students the decision to establish the period of return is too early because their university studies have only recently started while others have to deal with the life plans of their partners with whom they live in Italy.

> After graduation I would like to specialise in paediatrics or orthopaedics, most probably in Rome, because of the situation now in Greece. What is happening in Greece is our fault. We are paying for our character as rascals and thieves. After I would like to return to Greece but I don't know when. I see myself as an orthopaedic doctor in Crete. If you had asked this question two years ago, I would have told you I would be back soon. But with the situation we have in Greece, I don't know. Because if I get a job in Italy or another country, then I'll say "I'll stay!". I think the future will be better than in Greece but I believe that in a couple of years things will start to improve. Also because we have hit rock bottom! And we can only go up. We need to start slowly. Obviously if there are no problems in other countries because if Italy or Spain follow Greece... (Student in Medicine)

> I still have to do two exams. After graduation I would like to look for work here to earn money. Then maybe I'd do a "master" or a PhD but they aren't my first thought. It also depends on my boyfriend because we are a bit unsure. We thought of Switzerland too. First, I'll finish my studies. I would like to return to Greece but I don't know when. Now I don't think so, but one day I'll go back. I hope that the crisis won't put us in the grave! If the situation in Greece was different, like ten years ago, I would be back already. Over the next ten years I imagine a black future for Greece. We hope that things will get better. It's our fault because we vote, I hope that our people

will understand that. Although I see no alternative. Recently I went to Athens and it hurt me to see it so bad because it's less lively, the shops had closed. It made me think of Budapest, where I was two years ago. The situation is a bit different but you feel the poverty. And then in Greece entering a field of specialisation is difficult for my boyfriend. We are two people and I can't make plans only for me. Each influences the other. He wanted to go to America, he had this dream but I am against America and so we stayed here. And then America is too far away. There is also Sweden, but who goes there! There are opportunities but it depends on how many sacrifices you make. We think that life is short and it's just one. You must not work only to earn, it's enough to earn just the minimum necessary to live a normal life. (Student of Pharmacology)

I would like to return to Greece but I don't know when. After graduation I would like to do a PhD in design. Perhaps in another country. I'd like to do it in America. Maybe. But there it would cost a lot. I'd like to travel, to have experience... But, after a long period, I'll go back to Greece, because the idea of returning to Greece is always on my mind. At the end all people return to their roots. First I want to work abroad. If I do a PhD and I find a good job in another country and gain a lot of money, what do I do? Go back to Greece? Now my head is in the clouds and it's still the first year of university. I'm studying for me, to have an open mind, to know a lot of things. If I don't find something for an architect, I would also be willing to do something else, that is not architecture. The problem with Greece is that all graduates are in medicine, architecture and engineering. They can't find work and don't want to do other jobs. This is why the unemployment numbers are high. It is true that if one has a degree in something he wants to find a job related to it, but if you don't find it you have to do something else. (Student of Architecture)

At first I wanted to finish my studies, go right back to Greece and work in my father's study. Now I would like to have some work experience on my own, maybe abroad. For the moment, given the situation, we aren't going back to Greece. But one day we'll return. I don't know when. At first I thought I would after finishing my studies, but now it's a bit more complicated. And then my mother moved to Rome. Then my father advised me not to go back. He said that it's not the right time. But I want my children to grow up in Greece. This is my dream. Life is beautiful in Greece. All are more relaxed. I see myself as an architect in Athens but I don't know when. (Student of Architecture)

After graduation I would like to take a "master" and find work. I don't know if it's better to take the "master" at Sapienza University or abroad. And I'm also considering doing something that isn't related to the language stud-

ies. For example, a "master" in management, something that can help me in the labour market. For one year I spent more time in Thessaloniki than in Rome, but from September I'm thinking of staying in Rome again. I would like to go back to Greece but I don't know when. I'd love to live and work in Thessaloniki. But I'd like also to travel a lot. I see that in Greece there is no chance now, there are no jobs, no future. I think that I will continue abroad, for example, going to Amsterdam. My sister, who lives in Amsterdam, said to me that the living conditions there are pretty good. Unfortunately, Greece now is driving the young people out. When I say to my Greek friends that I want to go back they say that I'm crazy. They want to go away. I have many friends who are going away, to America, Germany, Australia. They know that I still enjoy living in Thessaloniki. But this is not something I want to do permanently now. Surely at first I'll try other experiences abroad. When I feel the need to take root again, I'll return to Greece. Ulysses returns to Ithaca! (Student of Letters and Philosophy)

Among those who are not willing to return to their country of origin, half of the students reported wanting to move to another country, that is not Greece or Italy, while the other half indicated Italy as the place where they could remain living.

Unlike the students planning to return, in this case it does not seem correct to speak of brain circulation, but rather of brain drain. In fact, this component of students does not choose Greece as a country in which to build on the learning experiences accumulated but prefers to remain abroad to continue the post-graduate studies and to search for a job. They are students looking for a better destiny, convinced that Greece is not the ideal place to find recognition and appreciation of knowledge and skills acquired. They are well aware of even more scarce job opportunities that the current economic situation is creating. Thus, the pessimistic view on the destiny of their country drives them to project their future in search of better horizons in Italy, other European countries (U.K., Sweden, Germany, Denmark, France, Austria, Switzerland and Belgium) or outside Europe (U.S. and Dubai). This holds true especially for students in medicine who are not willing to return home because they refuse to face the structural problems of Greek society (waiting lists for specialised studies, high levels of corruption, lack of job prospects, etc.). In addition, medical students are concerned about high medical inflation present in Greece. In effect, as pointed out by Labrianidis, Greece in the period 1970-2008, was

placed second among 168 countries for the number of doctors, with nearly 5 doctors per 1000 inhabitants (2011, p. 60). Although the high number of doctors per capita can be interpreted as an indicator of wealth and development, this does not apply to the Hellenic labour market that is unable to properly absorb all these doctors in both public and private sectors[14].

> I could go to Switzerland for my specialisation. In Greece I can't because you don't have the opportunity, not just in terms of salary. I should wait on the waiting list because entering medicine is complicated. Either you have to adapt and decide to do a specialisation that you don't like or at least the first that comes along. I'd like to do plastic surgery which is a bit difficult. Being here and now knowing a few people who can help me, I won't leave... In Greece, everyone says "Study medicine and be a doctor there, there's no future here". Many students are beginning to be absorbed into the labour market of Arabian countries and North Africa because of agreements with private companies that send doctors and staff regarding the medical sector. In Greece all people have remained attached to the past, the modern era doesn't work at all. Only tourism... The rest is retrograde. Many talented professors have gone to work abroad because they couldn't work in Greek universities. The Athens Polytechnic is one of the most famous universities in the world, but in the global university ranking it is very low. And in Greece the Polytechnic is the top for studies. And then there has always been a lack of research in Greece. There's only biology and genetics in Heraklion and then there is only the University of Athens, Thessaloniki and Patras. The rest don't exist. Medicine in Ioannina has become a bit famous over the past ten years, but always because of individual professors who tried to help Greek research. (Student of Medicine)

As we have seen, among the interviewees oriented towards staying abroad and never returning to Greece, there are also students who would like to pursue a university career by enroling in a PhD. In this case, both Greece and Italy are not considered ideal places to reach this goal. The main reason is related to non-transparent selection criteria, cronyism, corporatism, patronage, lack of meritocracy and inadequate investment in education. In addition, students say that they

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14 In addition to the medical profession, this phenomenon can also be extended to other professions traditionally considered to be very prestigious, such as lawyer and dentist (Katsanevas 2003).

are discouraged from gaining access to the labour market because of a limited supply of Italian university courses and poor university entrance organisation.

In fact, as clearly shown in the "Eleventh Report of the National Committee for the Evaluation of the University System":

> «Entry into university system permanently occurs at advanced ages. In particular, there is no entry programmed for the university researcher and there is the presence of temporary staff. [...] It should also be noted that Italian firms, also because of their small size, are not interested in employing post-docs (although sometimes they invest in scholarships), while the latter seem to be interested almost exclusively in academic careers» (CNVSU 2011, pp. 11, 13).

As can be seen from Figure 5, in the academic year 2009/10, we observe a significant reduction in the supply of doctoral programs compared to the previous years. According to forecasts, there is a high probability that in the future we will be facing a further significant reduction in staff and doctoral fellowships. The causes are to be found in the decrease in funds and economic resources. That, given the general financial crisis, will also affect research institutes and public and private organisations, while the most disadvantaged scientific areas will be those that have no access to external funding. All of these reasons, together with others such as the search for job opportunities more appropriate to their qualification, more favourable economic conditions and better quality of life, induce these students to leave Italy for other European countries after graduation.

Those who think to remain in Italy say that, after several years in the Capital, they are now rooted to the Roman social fabric and have created significant relational ties. Some have already started a job during their studies hoping to achieve a more advantageous position, others are likely to go to a city in the North of Italy for more favourable working conditions and corresponding to their qualification.

> Despite the disappointing mess of Greece and Italy, I have begun a career here. So for now I want to stay in Italy. After the "laurea di I livello", I will continue with the "laurea magistrale". Also because it will be useful to the

work I do. Having one more document is important. I have to continue this path. And then you have a career if you have a degree, given the crazy competition that exists today and all the students who come from universities. I'm working and I have signed up for some public examination, but I have to study hard because it's not easy. Otherwise I could continue with private companies and in this case I would aim at a good contract. It's a little different because I should get the VAT number and I'm not happy about that. My goal is to improve my position as regards my contract. In any case the experience is valid and I'm happy about that. I would not go back to Greece, also for all that I see there. With an unemployment rate of 14,8%, what will I find there? Especially in Corfù. And then, after 15 years out of your country, it's not easy to go back to a small island. I have now embarked on a career. I met some people. I have a curriculum known by companies. It's easier for me. In Greece, having taken a degree in Italy doesn't make a difference, unless you have very good connections. I do not know where I could go. Maybe if there will an opportunity I could try but I don't know if I want to. I am a bit confused about that. (Student of Economics)

Figure 5. PhD Courses in Italy (absolute values) – Academic Years 2003/04 - 2009/2010
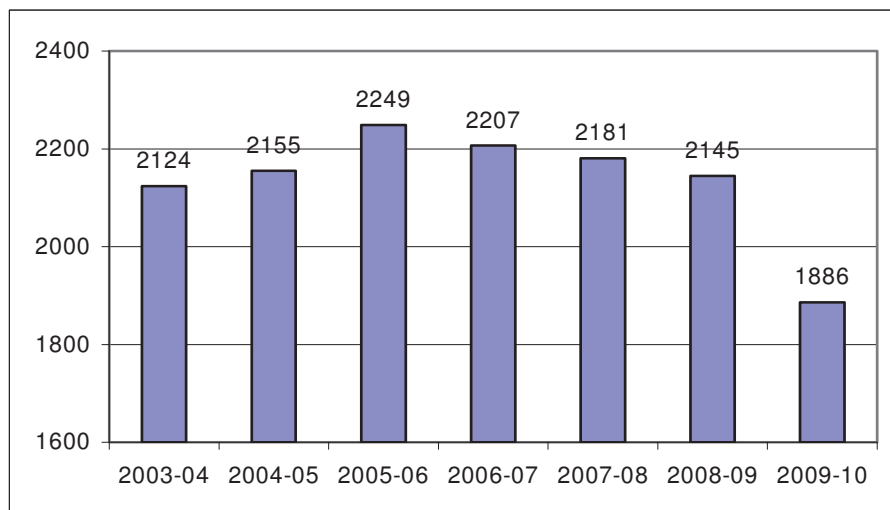
Source: CNVSU 2011

Table 7. Number of PhD courses and available places in the universities of Rome (absolute values) – Year 2009

University	N. PhD courses	Places	Average number of places available per course
Sapienza	161	1055	6,6
LUISS	9	62	6,9
LUMSA	3	12	4
Tor Vergata	70	464	6,6
Roma Tre	33	261	7,9

Source: CNVSU 2011

Finally, as mentioned above, some students, when asked if they were planning to return to Greece, were not able to answer. In all these cases, life projects and future plans are many and even more unstable. Consequently, a strong sense of confusion and disorientation pervades this component of the respondents. Some students put into serious

question their educational path thinking to start a new one in another subject area or to stop it. Others would like to continue their studies with a "master", a "corso di specializzazione" or a PhD. Others want to search for work but not knowing in which country, whether in Italy or another European country (Germany, France, Sweden, Switzerland). Finally, others have a strong desire to return home but are worried about their future because of the economic crisis, which at the same time becomes also psychological, that their country is facing.

When I graduate I'll be old and retired! Every day, everyone, Italians and Greeks, ask me if I want to go back to Greece! But I can't answer. In the sense that, up to 4 or 5 years ago, I didn't want to go back to Greece. But now I'm thinking about it. If I had a job there I'd go back. I'm tired of being alone. I miss my family. Also because here I have no relationships like I had in Greece, neihter with the Italians nor with the Greeks. I can't imagine my future. So far I haven't done anything that I imagined. Probably I will not go on in biology but I have, anyway, to get a degree. Although I like this faculty, it's not a faculty which allows you to study and work at the same time. I'd like maybe to take a course for tourist guides. It would also be easier. But if you do a course, you have to be there too. As to my work, they call me one-two days before a shift. And I can't say "No, I can't come". I want to do something that can give me money quickly. (Student of Mathematical, Physical and Natural Sciences)

Now I don't know whether to return to Greece. I'm pessimistic about its future. During the years of Simitis it seemed that everything was going well. The first years of Karamanlis were a marvel, the peak being the Olympics in 2004. We won the European Football Championship... And then catastrophe came because we had no economic base. The State collapsed and became poor but the Greeks are rich. In 35 years the Greeks have stolen from the State. Seen from outside, now that I'm older, it's clear that we are going badly. We stole and now we pay. Over the next few years, Greece won't be a country worth living in. From the economic point of view, over the next two years, things will be very difficult. Even for a doctor. If I find a job here why should I go back? My hope is that all people, who have been abroad, bring into Greece a little of the wealth and organisation from other countries. Then Greece will absorb them competely: one who has lived 20 years abroad, returns to Greece and immediately sinks into the Greek lifestyle: frappè, eating slowly, working a little, going out, trying to earn money with less work... The Greeks don't realise that only by working will we get ahead. (Student of Medicine)

After graduation, I'd like to take a "master" and find work. I don't know what kind of "master". To specialise is impossible because it costs a lot, 4000 euro per year. I don't know whether to return to Greece. If you bring a psychologist to Greece, with a certain language and a certain social fabric, it's difficult to go back there and do this job, because not living in that place you are not aware of many things. You should always compare your studies to all things around you. If I went back to Greece it would be a difficult path. If I were a doctor or an architect it would be easier, because they are faculties that allow you to find work and then they are prestigious. I'm pessimistic about the future of Greece. I don't know what might happen and how to make our situation better than now. But surely, for the Greeks, it's a way of comparison, to understand how they have created their society. The good thing is that now in Greece there's a process of self-criticism. At least for our generation. I also considered the possibility of going to another country, but I don't want to move. If I could find work here I would stay. Because it's always difficult to restart and create new friendships or new benchmarks. In the past the move was not easy for me. Probably now it would be worse. (Student of Psychology)

I have to do my graduation thesis. I'm missing only my defence of the thesis. After graduation I'll take a "master" and, if I get lucky, also a PhD. Let's see. I won a place for a "master" on the design and adaptation of new and old structures to create accommodation, low cost hotels and so on. I don't know whether to return to Greece. For now, given the situation, it's not the best time. There is the side of the logic and the sentimental side: the sentimental side would say "If I go back to Greece I'll find something", also because there are friends, parents and relatives... But on the other hand, I feel very comfortable here where I have, my boyfriend and my friends... If one now says to me that I must return by force to Greece it would be as if they tear off a portion of my heart! Anyway, I see myself as an architect in Greece. All this, however, is projected after the "master" and PhD. My intent is to find a job here. Things change. Now I'm 24 years old and I'm one of those people who say "Never say never". The things that I'm now interested in are studies and work. My boyfriend wouldn't come to Greece, because here he has a pharmacy. He wouldn't ever leave it to come to Greece in this period of total crisis! My vision is pessimistic about the future of Greece. For this reason I say "I'd like to return" but it's a dream. Maybe one day. My goal is to improve myself. My parents have spent a lot of money on my coming here, on getting a good education. So I'll have to do something good and go back to Greece, where unfortunately now there are no opportunities. If things were good in Greece, I would say yes, I want to return... When I came here my goal was to do five years of university and then go home. Then you have your experiences and begin to understand how the world works. (Student of Architecture)

I want to graduate within two years. I did 15 exams and they are less than the 30 acquired. Some exams are fairly simple. Once I take my degree I'll take a specialisation. I don't still know what kind of specialisation, because in this period I have no clear ideas. Perhaps in psychiatry or dermatology, although they have nothing to do with each other. These are the two choices that I am currently considering, but I don't know yet. I don't know whether to return to Greece. I think not. I don't even know if I want to stay in Italy. Maybe I'll go to another country. First of all it depends on where I go for my specialisation. From what I have heard, I'm thinking about Switzerland, France, Sweden and other northern European countries. Germany too, but there's the problem of the language which I consider very difficult. And if you go there for a specialisation you must learn it well, you don't go for Erasmus and I speak French. I might as well stay here even if I have to wait a long time for a place if the specialisation is good. Maybe I could go back to Greece but in the distant future, certainly not in the next ten years. I started with the idea of not wanting to live in Greece. In the near future I have a pessimistic vision of Greece but I think that, after 10 years, something will improve. So far I don't see good prospects. (Student of Medicine)

By telling their life stories, these students have built their biographies that allow for a significant and consistent order in their memory. Their stories are a sort of localisation, reworking and placement of existential moments in a meaningful temporal order. It also allows them to figure out a way to deal with adversity planning and projecting a new plane of existence for the future. Trying to build a plot that gives a meaningful form to their lives, these students are aware that their projects are never finished but they are permeated by impermanence and start from «meaningful totalities out of scattered events» (Ricoeur 1981, p. 278). Indeed, as Bruner writes, the narrative places readers in the position of "subjunctivising reality" (1986, p. 26). This means that these students are dealing with a world of human possibilities rather than setteled certainties, with a "subjunctivising world", where the success of their migration project, obtaining a university degree and a job corresponding to their education, is considered as an open possibility for the future, as an existencial chance to believe in, as the desire to imagine and achieve a successful life.

Their narratives symbolise alternative plots: it is a telling a story in different ways. Each one of them involves the subjunctive and retains the possibility of openness to change. There are stories on the way,

none come to a conclusion, the conclusion remains suspended, the goals are still far away. These are stories told in terms of struggle and circumstances, and as human development to cope with the uncertainty and to create new interpretations, hopes and expectations.

Conclusions: education as a key to overcoming the crisis

The survey results on Greek student mobility in the universities of Rome made it possible to identify the characteristics of Greek human capital in our country. In fact, the analysis of Hellenic student mobility brought out many aspects, issues and dynamics of inclusion in the education and social fabric of Rome, that has always been the most popular Italian destination of study for students who come from Greece. The evaluation of their university experience and university facilities is extremely useful in order to improve decision making and ensure equal opportunities for quality education, not only in relation to this specific national component, but to the whole university student population.

This issue seems to be even more effective in light of the poor internationalisation of the Italian higher education system. It is true that in the academic year 2009-10 the number of foreign students enrolled in Italian universities more than doubled in respect to the academic year 2000-01 (59.509 and 25.769 units respectively). It is also true that the incidence of students with foreign citizenship increases in all phases of the training process, from registration to graduation, continuing the positive trend of previous years. However, the Italian university system is characterised by a low percentage of enrolments by foreign students in our universities. Indeed, their incidence on the total student population is equal to 3% of total enrolment. This is a very low share compared to an OECD average equal to 8,5% (Miur 2011). There is no doubt that the level of internationalisation represents an important indicator to measure the attractiveness of higher education institutions of a country. According to the OECD report (2011), factors that strongly influence the choice of the country are manifold: the

quality of university teaching programs, the costs of university and life, immigration policies, the academic reputation of universities, the flexibility of programs for the acquisition of a degree, the recognition of foreign qualifications and policies for university admission. Also the geographical, economic or historical connection between the countries, the presence of migration networks, future job opportunities, cultural aspirations and government policies in facilitating the transfer of credits between institutions of the country of origin and country of destination and the similarity between the higher education systems play a key role in the internationalisation process of the university. A final important pull factor is the language used in universities. The preference, in absolute terms, for English-speaking countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom and United States) reflects the continued use of English as the universal language. From this point of view, the low level of internationalisation of the Italian university system can be attributed to the fact that only recently have courses in English been introduced to increase the attraction of foreign students. The low degree of internationalisation is attributed also to other causes such as, most importantly, a migration policy that is not very interested in identifying strategies for increasing incoming mobility, internationalisation and university competition. Indeed, the difficulty of programming and issuing of residence permits for study to non-EU students, the uncertainty of their annual renewal and the complex system for the recognition of qualifications acquired abroad, weigh heavily on the level of international student mobility in Italy. Moreover, the attractiveness policy continues to be little directed to systematic planning, as the initiative is often left to individual universities in the absence of specifically dedicated funding. Finally, we add other reasons such as the issuing of too few scholarships, paid mostly by private institutes, and the university housing shortage.

As noted, through a historical excursus on the presence of Hellenic students in Italy, during the last two decades there has been a substantial decline in Greek student mobility in Italian universities. Nevertheless Italy, after the United Kingdom and Germany, continues to be historically one of the main countries of destination for students from Greece. The main motivation is the exclusion from the Hellenic university system that drives many young people to leave their country in

search of other places of study. But, with respect to the choice of Italy as a destination for migration, exclusion from the university system runs alongside pull factors such as geo-cultural proximity, the presence of networks, the identification of the faculty chosen as better than those of other countries and the prestige attributed to an Italian degree. In reference to the latter two reasons, the mobility of Hellenic students tends to reproduce differences in the educational and economic arenas among various social groups and to strengthen the different study opportunities. Studying abroad, especially in a good university of an economically advanced country, as well as allowing access to knowledge, gives a certain prestige and recognition. It is, in other words, a fundamental means of social distinction: the degree is a guarantee of knowledge and respect, the country of destination gives a wealth of experience and the language learned provides a passport to participate in a cosmopolitan society. In a sense, the Greek higher education system is a kind of microcosm of what does not work in Greek society. Obviously we should not omit a large number of reasons that play a significant role in determining student mobility such as anticipatory socialisation, educational background, personal attitudes, the desire to have an experience abroad or the structural characteristics of the country of destination. However, the exodus of students reflects in part the lack of the quality of the university education system, where young Greeks, belonging to wealthy families or with an entrepreneurial spirit, go abroad to study, because the value of a foreign diploma is considered more prestigious.

This research highlights that many students are planning to return to Greece after completion of their studies in Italy, even if half of them are quite unable to define the period. It is also noted that expectations of a good future and a job corresponding to their qualification are very low. Concerned and aware of the severe consequences and negative effects that the current financial crisis has triggered in their country, the Hellenic students also consider the possibility of returning home and leaving again for other countries if their expectations will not be met. This means that, in addition to an exodus for studies, an additional risk could occur: that being, brain drain. In fact, they could decide to leave their country once again in search of better living conditions, professional growth related to their studies, salary satisfaction,

a better quality of life.

According to OECD data (2011), in 2009 Greece had the highest unemployment rate among graduates between 25 to 29 (13,2%) compared to all other OECD countries whose average was 5,7 %. The most disconcerting point is that, in the long run, having higher academic qualifications does not act as a shield of protection against unemployment. In fact, in the age group between 15 and 29 years, 14,6% of graduates were unemployed compared to 9,2% of those who have a higher secondary education diploma and 6,1% of those without a secondary education diploma. Moreover, the unemployment rate can be related to the type of studies. In fact, the subject area affects the labour market both in terms of the employment situation and the time of unemployment (Livanos 2010). Graduates who have completed their studies in disciplines such as philosophy, sociology, law, mathematics, physics, medicine, dentistry, pharmacology, biology, agronomy, have less employment opportunities and a greater chance of a long wait in the meshes of unemployment than those who come from fields more expendable in the labour market such as economics and computer science.

Some studies attribute the phenomenon of unemployment in Greece to the issue of over education, that occurs when the ideal number of graduates per capita is in excess (Livanos 2010). In effect, the number of graduates in Greece is high and statistics show that the percentage of graduates has increased steadily in recent years. The problem of over education is primarily related to the zero cost of studies that lead many young people to take an educational course based on their social status and not necessarily in relation to employment prospects. This also explains the choice of subjects traditionally considered as prestigious such as medicine, architecture and law. One of the main consequences is therefore the increase in the number of these professionals in the labour market. In addition, a further problem lies in the orientation of education towards the public sector, traditionally preferred over private because it has always acted as a safety net against unemployment by offering higher salaries, better working conditions and more attractive pensions. This has resulted, especially in the year 1980, in the increase in the number of people employed in occupations such as teaching, employment in public banks and public

administration. Despite the decline in the percentage of public employees, since the year 1990 to the present day, the supply of graduates has far exceeded the public sector demand, generating high levels of unemployment, under-employment, hetero-employment and emigration.

In contrast, other studies dispute the attribution of the high rate of graduate unemployment in Greece only to the phenomenon of over education (Labrianidis 2011). In the same way, the brain drain from Greece can not be regarded as the exclusive result of over education. In fact, although the number of graduates is increasing, it continues to be lower in proportion to the population when compared to other economically advanced countries. As illustrated by Labrianidis, the main destination countries for Greek graduates (Great Britain, Belgium, France, Holland and the U.S.) can absorb a number of them into the labour market, despite the higher number of people, compared to Greece, who annually acquire a university degree per 100 inhabitants (2011, p. 129). The principle cause should be found not so much in over education but rather in structural problems of the Hellenic economy that is unable to generate demand for graduates. Indeed, the Greek economy has never really moved into a model based on knowledge and technology. This has therefore resulted in a low demand for graduates and post-graduates, the inability to absorb qualified personnel into the labour market and, consequently, a high level of unemployment. The lack of competitiveness and innovation and the increasingly widespread unemployment, especially for the young, may increase the brain drain towards the traditional countries of emigration, thus generating a "reverse transfer of technology" due to the less economically developed countries, which instead of receiving benefits, offers them to the richest countries (Brandi 2004; Logan 2009).

Brain drain is a phenomenon that Greece has experienced since late 1950 (Grubel, Scott 1966; Coutsoumaris 1968), which has continued in subsequent decades (Kouvertaris 1973; Zobanakis 1980) and intensified over the 1990s. Although there was, in the first decade of the twenty-first century, a political and economic situation more stable than in the past, the unprecedented economic crisis that Greece is going through has caused, and will continue to cause, the increase in brain drain due to poor employment opportunities and strong austerity

measures taken by past governments, which depress the level of living standards.

Holezas and Tsakloglou (2008) estimate that today the emigration of graduates includes nearly all the scientific fields, while more than 3000 Greeks work as university professors and about 5000 as professors or researchers in universities of EU countries. A further significant scientific contribution, related to brain drain, comes from a survey conducted recently (Labrianidis 2011) in which 2734 Greek graduates participated. The results showed that, among those who have worked abroad, only 15,9% returned to Greece while 84% preferred to stay out of their country. Many respondents (81%) were mainly involved in areas such as business administration and law (33%), computer science, natural sciences and chemistry (25%) and engineering (23%). Among the countries in which they work, the dominant ones are Great Britain (3,7%), the United States (28,7%), Germany (6,6%) and Switzerland. Italy is in ninth place (2,3%). An interesting fact is that about 70% did not attempt to find work in Greece and that working conditions and wages of those who have returned, mostly belonging to the higher socio-economic classes, appear to be worse than the ones who left to go abroad. Labrianidis attributes the low demand for graduates to the late development of the technology sector of the Greek economy that is characterised by a high degree of weakness in absorbing skilled personnel into the labour market, especially in the private sector. A solution to economic recovery might be, therefore, the strengthening of private companies and moving them toward more innovative sectors in order to increase the demand for highly qualified personnel and to reduce the brain drain.

Obviously the brain drain is not the main cause of the economic crisis that Greece is facing today. However, if this massive human capital flight increases, which is very likely, it would surely worsen the situation as Greece would continue to suffer depression effects on its economy and to lose precisely the resources it needs for economic recovery.

In addition to the increase in brain drain, among the dramatic effects of the current economic crisis, a further decrease in the mobility of Hellenic students could be added and could be as a reflection of the crisis and a reduction in the incentives for study abroad. In effect,

studying in another country involves a wide range of high costs that, especially in this economic and historical contingency, the families are no longer able to cope with. Meanwhile Greece, despite Article 16 of the Constitution, can not guarantee everyone access to the higher education system. Thus a convoluted mechanism is triggered off, where the Greek economy can be interpreted as a symptomatic effect of the weakness of the education system to adapt to the needs of the labour market.

As suggested by the OECD (2011), education is the key to ending the crisis and to economic recovery. One road that may be taken is the implementation of major reforms aimed at overcoming problems that have long plagued the Hellenic education system and that can enhance its quality, while maintaining commitments to equity and social justice. It is true that in recent years, Greek governments have tried to introduce reforms. However, Greece is lagging behind many EU and OECD countries in implementing key reforms to improve the competitiveness of its education system. Over the last decade, Greece has not set long-term strategies based on the goals and benchmarks set by the Lisbon Strategy and the Modernisation Agenda for Universities. Therefore the OECD has proposed concrete short, medium and long-term actions in education and training to help Greece out of its economic difficulties. In particular, regarding the university sector, the OECD suggests some measures that, without additional funding, can improve the efficiency of the education system and reduce waste and unsustainable costs. Among the main measures an urgent adoption of new legislation on governance is suggested, oriented to the transition from a highly centralised and fragmented to a more flexible and decentralised system with respect to budget execution and management. In addition, the creation of an independent Authority (Hellenic Higher Education Authority) is urged to provide technical assistance for the implementation of the necessary reforms. Finally, of great importance may be the consolidation, merger or closure of small, low-enrolment, low-performing departments and institutions and the establishment of a more clearly differentiated binary system, including a university sector and a non university sector. All this will have as its goal the improvement of the production of graduates and human resources, and of education and training programmes to meet regional needs of employ-

ers and the labour market.

Undoubtedly Greece is experiencing a period of transition and a gap between intention and realisation remains. Indeed, where reforms have been introduced, a real impact on the quality and efficiency of the system has been lacking, due to the absence of full implementation of laws enacted. However, the effort that is being made in implementing the reform launched recently and aimed at reorganising the higher and secondary education system, must be emphasised. The main points of the reform concern the construction of a new identity, a new leadership and a new relationship based on trust, accountability and responsibility between the institutions, the central services and the society. All this could occur via transforming the system of access to universities that will involve the transfer of responsibility, regarding the selection and number of students, to the institutions. Other actions will be directed towards the internationalisation of students through bilateral and multilateral agreements with the aim of fostering cultural cooperation and of making Greece a country of international destination rather than an exporter of students. Participation in the Erasmus program and other European and international programs, the creation of joint degrees with foreign higher education institutions, and offering post-graduate programs in English could definitely represent effective factors for the strengthening of the internationalisation process. Further objectives of the reform should be oriented toward the closure or merger of many courses if they fail to attract enough students, the continuity with the process of harmonisation of the Greek university system to that of other European Union countries through the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), the elimination of the phenomenon of eternal students placing limits on the total duration of the studies, the development of lifelong learning and, finally, the creation of "useful degrees".

The Greek higher education system must, therefore, combine well with the needs of the Hellenic economy and society within a process of European integration and globalisation. The economic crisis is already accelerating the process of change and could perhaps provide an opportunity to change the destiny of Greece, by a rethinking of the education system that is the main coordinate for the path of development for the country, to affirm an important role in the European Un-

ion and to acquire competitiveness. We hope that the exodus of Greek students abroad can produce macro-consequences in Greece, triggering transnational policies that can have a huge impact on the national higher education policies, creating retroactive effects and producing structural changes to the Hellenic educational system.

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