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Reconstructing the contemporary Greek diaspora in Italy: Second World War and student mobility

Andrea Pelliccia [a] and Rigas Raftopoulos [b]

aInstitute for Research on Population and Social Policies of National Research Council of Italy (IRPPS-CNR), Rome, Italy; bDepartment of Political Science, Roma Tre University, Rome, Italy

ABSTRACT

In light of the poor and fragmented literature on contemporary Greek diaspora in Italy, not yet adequately covered by the historical and social disciplines, this article attempts to fill that void, thus providing an essential contribution to the studies on the Greek diaspora. Using the results of a field research, we analyze the two main push and pull factors of Greek migration to Italy in the second half of the twentieth century, namely the student migration and the migration related to the Second World War. Through the narrative reconstruction by the second generation members, we retrace the most important phases that have characterized the migratory experience of Greek migrants in Italy within a wider historical framework of analysis, also by using unpublished documents collected in Greek, Italian and American historical archives. We use an analysis method that combines the narratives of second generation members with the statistical analysis of the variables, by reconstructing the family history through the use of data derived from both questionnaires and life stories.

1. Introduction

This article is the result of a broader research project conducted by the Institute for Research on Population and Social Policies of the National Research Council of Italy (IRPPS-CNR), which took the phenomenon of contemporary Greek diaspora in Italy as its object of study (Pelliccia and Raftopoulos 2016). In light of the poor and fragmented literature on this topic, not yet covered by the historical and social sciences, the research has attempted to fill this void, thus giving an essential contribution to the studies on the Greek diaspora in the world and trying to increase qualitatively different perspectives and viewpoints in the study of human migration. Using unpublished documents collected in Greek, Italian and American historical archives, the Greek diaspora in Italy has been historically reconstructed, by focusing on the migration flows of the second half of the twentieth century. Furthermore, a long-term and thorough fieldwork has been realized. It has taken second generation Greek migrants as its object of study, both those currently living in Italy and those who have decided to implement the counter-diasporic migration project.

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2. Theoretical framework of the Hellenic diaspora historiography

Apart from some contributions (Chasiotis, Katsiardi-Hering, and Ambatzi 2006; Korinthios 2012; Kornetis 2007; Manousakas 1991; Nikas 1991; Pelliccia 2012; Raftopoulos 2012; Solaro 2006), relating mainly to a specific geographical area or a peculiar sub-population, contemporary Greek diaspora in Italy has not been adequately covered by the historical and social disciplines yet. In the light of the lack or fragmentation of the scientific production on this topic and in order to fill this gap, a research project concerning contemporary Greek diaspora in Italy was designed and implemented. Thus, the principal originality of this paper lies in the analysis within an under-explored geographical/ ethnic context, which deserves much further research.

A careful analysis of the diaspora and migration studies coming from a historical background let us stress the paramount importance of a comparative approach. This approach is very useful for sheding light on the specific features of each diaspora community and it can be used on several different levels. It is possibile to compare, for instance, the relationship between the single migrant, the social group he/she belongs to with his/her past and future, that in to say, it is possible to study how culture and traditions of origins modify during the diasporic path. Moreover, the relationship between the individual migrant and the State may be helpful to depict the traits of a comparative history of migration politicies, while, another typical topic that can take advantage of the comparative framework is that of the migrant assimilation in the social fabric of the country of destination (*ensomatosi*). Last but not least, the study of the relations between migrants is profoundly revealing of the peculiar characteristics of each foreign migrant community.

The comparative theoretical approach of the aforementions aspects may easily lead to put oneself some key questions such as, for example, for each community abroad, the reasons that pushed migrants to leave their home country and the reasons that pulled them towards a specific destination. The former ones are naturally connected to Greece while the latter ones are linked to Italy. It is realistic to assess that those reasons are interconnected as well as it is appropriate to keep in mind, for our study, that italian local realities, urban and regional, posses highly distinguishing traits. On the level of study of the specific traits of the Greek communities abroad a legitimate question is whether it exists a channel of communication among the different communities, and, if so, if it regards substantial or secondary issues and which criteria, possibily, define that communication. The relations between the newcomers and 'historical' migrants represents an issue to tackle as well as the question of the transformation of meanings and representations attributed to 'foreigners' on an economic and nationalistic level. The issue connected to the defintion of belonging to a foreign society, the spontaneous or artificial creation of Greek institutional organizations within the arrival society and how it may help or prevent assimilation are similarly issues to carefully examine. On a theoretical level it is evident that the study of a diaspora community based only on the analysis of its legally recognized charter is not sufficient because the complex group of migrants is defined as all they who make the diasporic path, a whole the community represent a subset of. This conception leads once more to the fundamental difference between the historical diaspora and mass migration. They are two phenomena that point out to very different, autonomous and specific traits (Mandylara 2004).

Over the last few decades the historiography on the Hellenic diaspora in the world has been developing from a first phase in which sociological and journalistic research prevails to a phase in which studies are set with more typical methodologies and tools of historical disciplines. The first work by Psiroukis (1974) was joined by the research of the sociologist Tsoucalas (1977) and followed by the work of Exertzoglou (1988) on the relationship between Greek historiography and the capital of the Greek abroad, that was relevant to questions of method and interpretation. The turning point in historical studies on the Greek diaspora occurs when researchers decide to clearly underline the substantial difference between the transoceanic and European emigration of the twentieth century on the one side and the previous phenomenon of the mercantile colonies on the other side, thus constituting a specific field of investigation and interpretation. Among the first authors of these researches are Olga Katsiardi-Hering with her study, *I elliniki paroikia tis Tergestis* (The Greek community of Trieste) (1750–1830) (1986), Yorgos Dertilis, *To zitima ton trapezon (1871–1873). Oikonomiki kai politiki diamachi stin Ellada tou XIX aiona* (The issue of the banks [1871–1873]. Economic and political conflict in Greece in the XIX century) (1980), which posed the question of the strategy of Hellenic merchant capital, and Lina Ventoura, *Metapolemikes prosenghiseis tis ellinikis metanasteusis* (Post-war approaches to Greek migration) (2004). Furthermore, since the first half of the 1970s, the Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora – published in New York – contributes to the advancement of research on this subject and, at the same time, shows the increase in the study of the Hellenic diaspora in the community of historians with Greek origin in the United States (Chatziiosif 2004).

Remaining in the context of Anglo-Saxon historical studies, Richard Clogg's research deserves special attention. Clogg tends to emphasize the scarcity of historical studies on this subject – especially in comparative terms with other and similar diasporas -, the rare attempts to construct a typology of the diaspora, and the difficulty in classifying the Greek case. He also stresses the need to pose the question of the definition of the Greek diaspora in the modern and contemporary age and proposes a periodization of the three great migratory flows that have shaped today's Greek presence abroad: the first covers the chronological span 1890–1912, the second concerns the years following the Asia Minor catastrophe (1921–1922) and the last concerns the early 1950s and 1960s of the last century. The English historian also focuses on the issue – which is central to the study of each diasporic community – of how to define a Greek of third or fourth generation when he/she lost both the Greek language and the Orthodox religion (Clogg 1999).

The historiography of the Greek diaspora identifies three major fields of study: the mercantile colonies, the Russians of Ponto in the Black Sea, and the mass emigration, (*emporikes paroikies*, *rosopontoi*, *maziki metanasteusi*). It is the very history of the term diaspora and its application to the Hellenic case which, according to the historian Christos Chatziiosif, explains the basic forms and contradictions of the historiography on the diaspora. The term is in fact borrowed from Jewish history from which it adopts

> a contemporary policy, the effort to harmonize the political activities of the leadership of the local communities of emigrants with the foreign policy of the Hellenic State. The entire political and bureaucratic construction of 'foreign Hellenism' (*apodimos ellinismos*), with its symbols, its secretariats, its ministers, and so on, has the Jewish-Israeli model as its source of inspiration.

From here the contradictions emerge of the historiography of the diaspora that studies how the Hellenic social fabric relates more closely with its reference context: ethnocentrism and ethnocentric research. According to Chatziiosif, it is essential instead to study the similarity of the Hellenic communities, from time to time, with respect to the host society and other similar communities, in order to understand their specific features (2004, 83–84).

3. Methodology

The fieldwork focusing on the second generation has been carried out following a qualitative approach, through structured questionnaires and the collection of life stories. The conduction of the interviews was face to face and via the web through the survey methodology CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interviewing). Two hundred fifty-six people have been interviewed by questionnaire and seventy life stories have been collected, from May 2014 to February 2015. The sample has included people with at least one parent of Greek nationality whose common denominator does not lie so much in the citizenship as a legal-normative concept but rather in the nationality understood as a sense of belonging to a nation and to the Greek diaspora, also known as *Omogénia* (Anagnostou 2009; Tziovas 2009). In light of this, we have been taken into account individuals – with Greek, Italian or double citizenship – whose parents emigrated from the Greek State and the territories inhabited by 'ethnic Greeks', with particular reference to Egypt and *irredenta*, that are the regions inhabited by Greek-speaking Orthodox Christian populations which were not included in the Greek State at the time of its creation during the nineteenth century.[1] Therefore, we have taken into account those people who claim a common identity and a Greek ethno-national consciousness, meaning ethnicity (which for the Greeks coincides with nationality) in terms of ancestry, language, culture, historical memories, national traditions or religion (Kitromilides 1990; Koukoutsaki-Monnier 2012; Veremis 1990).

A section of the field research has focused on the family history and in particular the migration experience of the Greek first generation rebuilt by second generation members. The focus of this article will be on some socio-demographic data of Greek migrants and on the analysis of the main reasons that prompted them to come and live in Italy. In the course of this analysis, we will connect the empirical material to the theoretical framework, reconstructing the family history through the use of data derived from both questionnaires and life stories.[2] We will use an analysis method that combines the narratives of second generation members with the statistical analysis of the variables, with the aim of making the reading and understanding of the issues clearer, by retracing the most important phases that have characterized the historical period of the first generation: those relating to the Second World War and student migration towards Italy.

This paper makes also use of unpublished documents from archive in Greece, Italy and the United States. In particular they come from both military and civilian archives such as the AUSSME (Historical Archive of the Army Staff Office, Rome), EMIAM (Association for the Study of the Left-wing Youth, Athens), ASKI (Archive of the Contemporary Social History, Athens), ACS (Central State Archive, Rome), IAYE (Historical Archive of the Foreign Ministry, Athens), Princeton University-Rare Books and Special Collections (Princeton-New Jersey). These documents have been crucial on both a quantitative and qualitative level since they helped us in depicting with precision the number of people

beloging to the first and second wave of Greeks towards Italy and also in drawing a timeline of the arrivals. This accomplishment had never been attempted before as we ascertained just few and confused references in the scarse existing literature on this subject. Moreover, the autonomy of our archival sources gave us the possibility to crosscheck facts and figures.

4. Socio-demographic data of the first generation

As for socio-demographic data, in most cases (92.3%) the sample of the second generation is composed of the children of mixed couples, almost always a parent born in Greece and one born in Italy. Obviously, in our case, we will consider only the Greek parents. Overall, the first generation sample includes 282 individuals. With reference to gender, the proportion of men and that of women has almost the same percentage (51.1% vs 48.9%) while, regarding the period of birth, there is a prevalence of those born in the first half of the twentieth century (62.0%), especially in the female component.

As many as 93.8% were born in Greece, compared to a narrow minority that sees its origins in other countries, especially in Egypt. Among those who came from the Greek State, 67.4% were born in mainland Greece and 32.6% in the islands. Among the administrative regions of mainland Greece, Attica is the most represented (44.4%), followed by Central Macedonia (17.0%), Eastern Macedonia and Thrace (9.8%), Western Greece (7.8%) and Epirus (7.2%). As for the islands, South Aegean (66.7%), Crete (17.3%) and the Ionian Islands (13.3%) are the most prevalent administrative regions. In greater detail when examining the geographical distribution, it is interesting to note differences by gender: the cases of males who came from mainland Greece (75.9%) are far higher than those of women (58.6%), and the gap among the islanders is just as high, especially from the South Aegean, corresponding to 17 percentage points (24.1% for men and 41.4% for women).

In reference to citizenship, 42.7% of the sample consists of individuals with only Greek citizenship, compared with those who have dual citizenship (35.2%) and those who are only Italian citizens (22.1%). By aggregating all cases including Greek citizenship, nearly eight out of ten people have retained Greek citizenship.

5. Research findings

5.1. Arrival time and migration reasons

Migration flows to Italy of the target in question cover a period of about eighty years: from the late 1920s to the first decade of the twenty-first century. However, first flows to Italy started to have a significant number of Greek immigrants only during and after the Second World War, in the mid-1940s, constituting 25.6% of parents arrived in Italy. The next three decades have seen the most impressive flow reaching as much as 57.1%, with the highest peak in the 1970s (30.9%). On the contrary, since 1980, we see a gradual and sharp decrease of flows to Italy (17.4%), mostly relating to sentimental reasons. Among people from mainland Greece, as many as 68.3% arrived in Italy at the turn of 1950 and 1970, while the islanders had the highest peaks in the period prior to 1950 (54.5%).
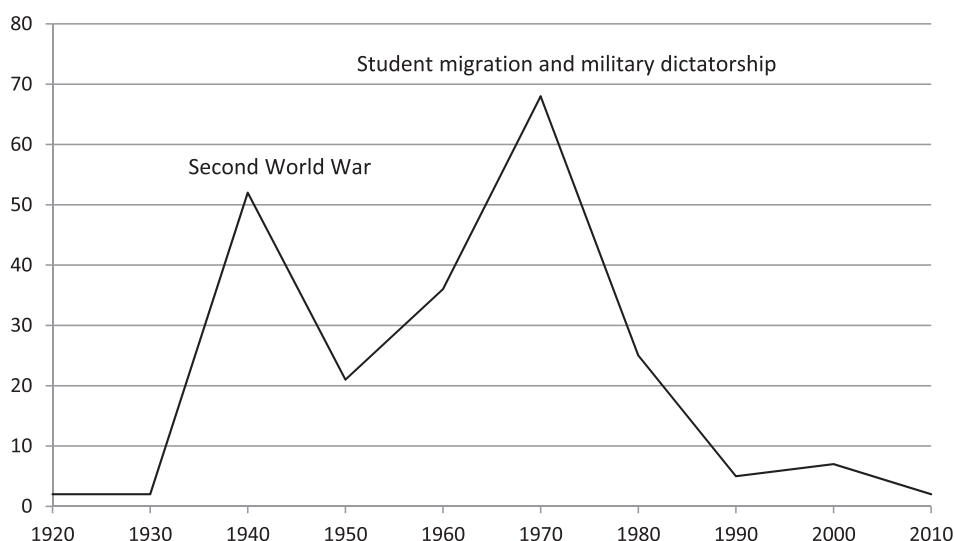
Figure 1. Arrival time in Italy (a.v.).
Source: IRPPS-CNR.

As shown in Figure 1, the parents of the people interviewed belong mainly to the migration flows in the second half of the twentieth century, characterized by student mobility and post Second World War migration. Analyzing the reasons that prompted the parents to move to Italy, the research results show that the main reason is migration for study (32.1%). Being the Greek first generation characterized by the history of the twentieth century and by the troubled experience of the diaspora and war, another significant motivation is connected to the events of the Second World War (11.9%), accompanied by a further cause closely linked to the war, namely following their own partners in Italy (11.9%). The presence of family members or relatives in Italy (11.9%) and being married to a person with Italian nationality (8.2%) are just as important, followed by work-related reasons (5.7%) and political reasons (5.4%) mainly in relation to the period of the military dictatorship in Greece. Finally, to a lesser extent, the choice to follow their parents in Italy (4.0%), geographical proximity (2.6%), cultural affinity (2.3%) and the presence of friends in Italy (0.9%).

In the following paragraphs, we will analyze the two main reasons that have acted, at the macro level, as push–pull factors of migration project of our sample, namely the student migration and the one related to the Second World War. In the aforementioned subdivision of the three major fields of the historiography of the Greek diaspora, our paper finds place in the mass migration field.

6. Student migration: the large flow to Italy

6.1. Historical notes on emigration for study

As we have seen, the reason related to the student migration has determined the largest flow of the Greek migrants. In order to better frame the phenomenon of Greek student

mobility in Italy, it is appropriate to illustrate the history of emigration for study from Greece, which has inevitably affected the sample of this research.

After the Second World War, the Greek university students' mobility took on a mass character, mainly due to the increase in the selection process of the access system of the Athens and Thessaloniki universities in the early 1950s. The number of Greek students abroad in 1960 reached 8,717 and from then on doubled every decade: in 1970 14,147 and in 1980 31,509 (Kiprianos 1995, 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. According to UNESCO (1987), 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 1,000 inhabitants, whereas the percentage of other European countries was much lower (0.2%–0.4%). The causes of this excessive growth are mainly identified in the reform by the Education Ministry (1964–1965), which further stifled the university system, and during the regime of the Colonels (1967–1974) which drove thousands of young students off the territory. They were especially directed towards Italy.

In the twentieth century, the first significant flow of Greek students into Italy began in the early 1950s, 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 Greek students to avoid taking the general knowledge test, but not the Italian language exam, to access the field of study chosen (Cammelli 1990, 35). According to the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT), the Greek students enrolled in Italian universities during the academic years between 1952 and 1954 were respectively 1,420, 1,057, and 1,047 out of a total of 2,492, 2,162 and 2,218 foreign students. Most of the students from Greece were enrolled at the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, Veterinary Medicine, and Mathematical, Physical and Natural Sciences (ISTAT 1957, 23, 263).

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. In the mid-1960s, the presence of Greek 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. In 1962, according to the Italian National Institute of Statistics, there were 893 Greek students enrolled out of a total of 2,739 foreigners during the academic year 1961–1962, mostly in Mathematical, Physical and Natural Sciences (307), Medicine and Surgery (246) and Engineering (202), and 671 'off-course' students out of a total of 1,228 students who have not finished their studies in the prescribed time (ISTAT 1965, 27, 259, 261–262). During the academic

year 1964–1965, 1,014 Greek students were enrolled at Italian universities (out of a total of 3780 foreigners), mainly in Engineering (410), and Medicine and Surgery (185), while Greek off-course students were 651 in the same academic year (ISTAT 1967, 299).[3] 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. 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 Greek students began to gradually decline while maintaining, at least until the mid-1980s, a very significant number (Pelliccia 2014).

With regard to our sample, among those who arrived in Italy for reasons related to higher education, well over half (56.7%) arrived at the turn of the decades 1950 and 1970, with a gap of 24.6 percentage points compared to the total average of people who came for university studies, and reaching high peaks in the years 1970. In addition, the results of our research show mainland Greece as the main geographical macro-area of origin: among those who came from the mainland, mainly from Attica, the incidence is equal to 44.5% against the percentage among the islanders (14.0%). Moreover, comparing the gender, a further substantial difference can be detected, with a gap of about 23 percentage points. Actually, it is mainly males who moved to Italy for study with a proportion (43.3%) higher than that of women (19.7%).

6.2. The period of dictatorship: students against the regime

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. As told by many respondents, in Italy a real process of politicization 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 socialization for youth subcultures.

> My father came to Italy for study and political reasons. He was a member of the Greek communist party and the Greeks were attracted by the PCI (Italian Communist Party). My father grew up during the years of dictatorship and there was a political ferment. At that time, many Greeks came to study in Italy, there was a great network. And they saw the PCI as an example to follow. My father moved to various cities, as many other Greeks who moved from university to university, based on their university exams. His business was politics for the Greek communist party. My mother was enrolled in the PCI. So, my parents had a political affinity: she will have seen him as a real Greek revolutionary! (Maria, origin of the father: Attica. Date of the interview: 20 May 2014)

> My father came to Italy in 1970, during the dictatorship. He departed from Drama on a *Vespa* crossing the Balkans, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Trieste and then he arrived in Perugia. He was enrolled at the University for Foreigners in Perugia, where he met my mother. My father came for political reasons and study, even though he was not a refugee but a dissident.

> My grandfather was a partisan and, in the period of the colonels, being the son of a communist meant to be excluded from public life, you could not study or have an employment contract. At that time, you know, Greece was very popular, with Mikis Theodorakis and so on. My father was very fond of politics and he took part in many initiatives. My mother was very attracted to Greece! (Theodoros, origin of the father: Western Macedonia. Date of the interview: 21 May 2014)

Although they were not recognized 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 characterized 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, 161).

In those years, Greek students created various student associations. The main associations were merged in the 'Federation of Associations of Greek students in Italy' (FASEI), which had the collective solution of problems as its objective. These problems were not limited only to the status of the student abroad but embraced the whole issue of education and the positive role of students in Greece and abroad for the exit of the country from the state of economic and social underdevelopment (ASKI 1964; EMIAN 1964a). During the seven years of military dictatorship, in Italy 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. Greek students organized to raise awareness of their Italian peers on the dramatic conditions of students in Greece against the regime. More generally, they attempted to mobilize the Italian civil and democratic society (political parties, unions, associations) and send a message to the Italian government and the Greek military government on the degree of opposition and dissent against colonels (Kleitsikas 2000). The Greek student movement abroad provided to the movement in Greece a positive contribution due to the relationship with foreign student movements better prepared organizationally. It was a kind of 'school' whose teachings were then introduced by these students themselves, after returning to Greece, in the student movement (EMIAN 1964b).

In addition, right-wing organizations were created in favour of the military regime and among them the most important in terms of presence in the Italian territory was undoubtedly the 'National League of Greek students in Italy' (ESESI) with offices in major Italian university cities (Rome, Bologna, Padua, Venice, Ferrara, Parma, Modena, Siena, Milan, Florence, Naples, Palermo, Messina, Catania, Bari, Perugia, Pavia). The League was actually one of the tools that the regime created abroad closely with embassies and consulates, and with the purpose of keeping tabs, controlling and repressing all dissent and resistance in the universities. These operations were not confined to Italy and students but also extended to Canada, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, England, and Austria, and they also penalized Greek workers. Planned measures included strict surveillance, confiscation of passport and physical violence (ACS 1970–1975; Princeton University 1969).

6.3. The 1970s and the extraordinary wave of Greek students

As mentioned above, in the year 1970 the flow of students from Greece intensified, reaching its peak in the academic year 1976–1977 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 (Figure 2).

It should be emphasized 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 1976–1977, 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 1975–1976 (with 10,418 enrolments), the Greek student migration (Cammelli 1990, 45).

6.4. The 1980s and the decline in student flow

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 1980s
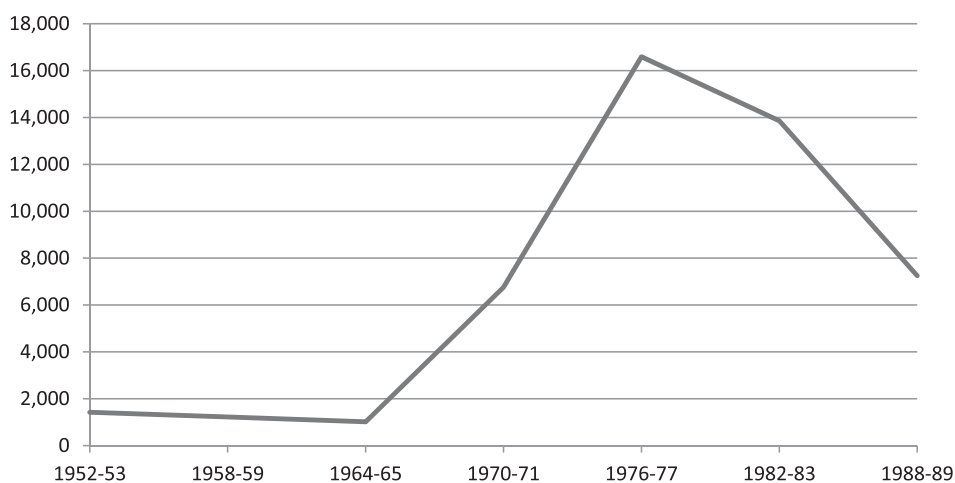
Figure 2. Greek students enrolled in the Italian universities. Academic years from 1952–1953 to 1988–1989 (a.v.).

Source: Elaboration on ISTAT data.

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 1980–1985, 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.

Overall, it was a geo-cultural proximity that was internalized for decades in the history of the Greek student mobility. It 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 was also due to a dense series of narrative plots that contributed over time to building and rebuilding some collective imagination, both socially and culturally shared (Pelliccia 2013a). It should also be added that the sample of the present study had a love story with Italians in common. As described by the words of some individuals interviewed, this happened very often within the walls of the universities. After arriving in Italy with the intention of exclusively obtaining a degree and then returning to Greece, many of these students felt in love with their peers, got married, created a family and took root in Italy, thus changing their life plans.

> My father came to Italy after the Greek civil war. He came to study. He studied engineering and lived in a student housing in Rome. I don't know why he chose Italy and Rome. His brother attended a post-graduate school of medicine in England and then in Germany. Maybe he came because in Italy it was easier to enter university. And perhaps because Italy was closer, since at that time usually Greek students didn't travel by plane. My mother came from Tuscany to Rome for the same reason. She studied pharmacology and she lived in the same student housing. They met there and got engaged. (Costas, origin of the father: Central Greece. Date of the interview: 23 June 2014)

> My father moved from his village to Athens where he tried to enter university. Unfortunately he failed to enter the faculty he wanted to attend, that was chemical engineering. After two years he decided to move to Italy, to Naples, where there was also a cousin. It was 1972. At that time many Greek students came to study in Italy. There, he studied chemical engineering. In 1976 he met my mother who had gone to study from Avellino to Naples. (Laura, origin of the father: Thessaly. Date of the interview: 27 June 2014)

7. Second World War and migration to Italy

As mentioned, another significant cause of emigration is linked to the Second World War. Unlike the student mobility, which involved mainly those coming from mainland Greece, in this case islands represent the predominant place of origin, prominently the southern Aegean islands (Dodecanese). In fact, comparing the geographical macro-area, the gap between islands and mainland Greece is very significant amounting to 24.1 percentage points (27.9% and 3.8%).

Another feature that distinguishes the reasons related to the war is the involvement of both parents of second-generation respondents. In fact, there is a common story that sees Greek mothers moving to Italy after the war, or at least after the armistice of 8 September 1943, with Italian fathers enlisted in the Italian army.

As for emigration for study, even here it would be appropriate to retrace, in general terms, the most important phases that have characterized this historical period, through the contribution of some fragments of in-depth interviews by second generation members, including those who, still children, have experienced first-hand the war events.

7.1. The victory of the Axis powers

The Italian campaign of the Second World War began on 28 October 1940, when the troops of the Royal Italian Army (*Regio Esercito Italiano*) invaded Greek territory from their Albanian bases. The Greek forces managed to curb the Italian offensive and, later, even to counterattack. The mountain position war lasted until April 1941, when the Germans invaded Yugoslavia and Greece, forcing them to capitulate in a short time. In April of the same year, one of the last operations by Italian soldiers in this war theatre had the possession of the Ionian Islands (Corfu, Kefalonia and Zakynthos) as a goal. On 3 May, there was an impressive Italian-German parade through the streets of Athens celebrating the victory of the Axis powers involved in the military campaign in Greece (Germany, Italy and Bulgaria). In Athens a Greek military government was set up, under the control of Germany and Italy, led by General Georgios Tsolakoglou. After the signing of the surrender and the subsequent occupation of the island of Crete, Greece was divided among the Italian, German and Bulgarian forces. Italy, which was already present in the Aegean with the possession of the Dodecanese, secured control of nearly all of mainland Greece, as well as the Ionian Islands, the Cyclades, the Sporades and Eastern Crete.

The Greek resistance began to form immediately after the military occupation, especially in the central part of the Greek territory, totally independent from the government in exile and the Allied forces. Despite the low initial impact of the response to occupation of the country, repression began already in the first few months against all those civilians deemed to be communist or suspected of having contacts with British soldiers (Rodogno 2003). In this respect, the Italian army also set up internment camps in the Peloponnese, Boeotia, the Ionian islands and Albania.

7.2. After the armistice of 8 September 1943

On the eve of the armistice with the Anglo-Americans on 8 September 1943, about 235,000 Italian soldiers were in the Hellenic country. After the armistice proclaimed by Marshal Badoglio, the Italian army faced an unexpected new phase that culminated in a general dissolution: entire divisions disintegrated, others gave up their weapons, others took the side of the German *Wehrmacht*, or entered the Greek resistance.

> After the famous treason of Germans in Corfu, my father, who went to Greece as a soldier, joined the Greek partisans. He crossed all the Greek front from Corfu, up to Macedonia and mountains around Thessaloniki. He fully embraced the ideal of these people and of the resistance, being conscious of what they were going through. My mother's brothers were partisans. My father risked often his life and limb, because the Germans hunted him down. The Germans were looking for him because he was considered a bandit. There were also Greek traitors who denounced for favouritism or personal gain. My parents got married in Greece. After the war, they came to Italy in 1945. My father wrote all the events of war down in a black notebook that my mother kept. I think this notebook still exists among the papers that he left my mother. (Giancarla, origin of mother: Central Macedonia. Date of the interview: 3 October 2014)

Meanwhile the German army, supplanting the Italian occupation troops, put in place a plan of action that was the disarmament of former allies or the obligation to remain faithful, repressing all attempts of resistance and uprising, especially in the Ionian Islands

(AUSSME 1947a; Loukatos 1980). On 8 September 1943, following the declaration of the armistice of Cassibile which brought to an end the hostilities between Italians and Anglo-Americans, German units carried out one of the largest massacres in the island of Kefalonia. After having opposed the order of disarmament and having fought for several days, the Italian soldiers of the *Acqui* division surrendered to the German army and were ruthlessly slaughtered thereafter. Similar incidents took place in Corfu which housed a garrison of the same division *Acqui*. As witnessed by the following narrative fragment, the survivors were deported almost all to Germany or the territories occupied by the Germans, on board ships that were destroyed by underwater mines or were torpedoed, with serious loss of life and injuries.

> My father went to Corfu because of the war. There, he met my mother and they got married. I don't remember when my parents came to Italy, maybe in 1941 or 1942 but I'm not sure. Anyway, it was still during the war. They came to Italy but then my father came back to Corfu. Then, there he was taken prisoner by the Germans. By fragments of my family stories, I know that he was on a ship which then blew up. Then, he managed to reach the shore by swimming, and my grandfather rescued and brought him home. I know that all Italians were ordered to appear and the Germans shot or captured them. My father made the decision to show up. So he was taken prisoner and was brought to Germany where he stayed for a long period. My father didn't talk much about his war experience. It was a kind of taboo. When in 1982 my mother died, we came back home from her funeral and my father told us a yarn about his war experience. It was the only time in his life. Through my mother, I knew that during his imprisonment he did whatever he could to stay alive. But they are small fragments of memories. (Linda, origin of the mother: Ionian Islands. Date of the interview: 27 May 2014)

The German occupation of Greece ended in October 1944, and the British forces established a government of national unity in Athens. From that time until the spring of 1945, many Italian soldiers gave themselves up to the Greek authorities and were expelled, since they were considered undesirable, or were destined for concentration camps that had passed, meanwhile, under British military control. Therefore, the number of Italians present on Greek territory dwindled drastically, going from 30,000 to 7,000 between 1944 and 1945, many of whom lived in very precarious economic conditions, exacerbated by the seizure and expropriation of assets by the Greek authorities (Clementi 2013, 343–344). In addition, all Greek women who were united in marriage with Italian soldiers and their offspring should be mentioned. Suffice to say that, between September 1943 and October 1944, approximately a thousand marriages between Greek women and Italian military were recorded, of whom 456 in the Greek capital. The term *Armata s'agapò* ('Army I love you') was born as a result of such a large number of marriages. In fact, the British military sarcastically renamed the XI Italian Army with this new label.

Having acquired Italian citizenship after marriage, many of these women were 'repatriated' following Italian soldiers still present on Greek soil, by the will of the Greek government and under Italian law. As told by several participants to our research, for many of these women, leaving their homeland and the family of origin towards a foreign country, losing their meaningful social relationships and their cultural codes of belonging, represented a strong psychological, social and cultural trauma.

7.3. The Italian occupation of the Dodecanese archipelago

A separate mention should be made with regard to the occupation of the Dodecanese, since it occurred before the outbreak of the Second World War. Italian troops led by General Giovanni Ameglio occupied the Dodecanese in 1912, as a consequence of new economic development policies and military interests. After acquiring the official name of 'Italian Islands of the Aegean', the Dodecanese were subjected to an 'Italianization plan' launched by governor Mario Lago and continued by his successor Cesare Maria De Vecchi, in order to make inhabitants Italian citizens (Pignataro 2011–2013). Examples of such assimilationist programme were the abolition of the Greek language in all schools, the compulsory affiliation to the Italian Fascist youth organization *Balilla*, and the obligation to attend parades or other fascist ceremonies (Doumanis 2003, 113). At a political level and for our purposes, it is important to remember the D.L. 1854 of 15 October 1925, subsequently converted into Law 1139 of 15 April 1926 in which former Turkish subjects were considered to be Italian citizens. The requirements were that they resided in the Italian Aegean islands up to 6 August 1924, and gave up their status as foreigners. In addition, this Decree Law extended to: their wives and their children born in those islands after that date, the children whose father or mother were considered Italian citizens, or if the father was an unknown or stateless person, as long as the children were not more than eighteen years old up to 6 August 1924.

7.4. The Dodecanese after 8 September 1943

After 8 September 1943, the Dodecanese suffered the attack by German troops which did not want to leave the Allies a strategic base of operations. The islands were the scene of violent clashes between Italians and Germans, before falling into the hands of the Nazi armed forces. As happened in the rest of the Greek territory, in the Dodecanese the Italian military acted in different ways towards the *Wehrmacht*, splitting into fascists and loyalists to the King of Italy, although choosing to surrender their weapons prevailed. In fact, almost all Italians in the Dodecanese (5,500 out of 6,000) did not adhere to the Social Republic of Mussolini and many of them, considered traitors, were captured and interned or were shot by the Germans (Clementi 2013, 239–240). Other soldiers were deported to Germany or other European territories in the hands of German troops to be used in arms industry, with the close cooperation of *Camicie Nere* (Voluntary Militia for National Security) which had joined the departments of the *Wehrmacht* and were appointed to control the transfer of their compatriots to Europe (Aga-Rossi and Giusti 2011, 121). Many were also those who, not wanting to follow the new regime, went into hiding in order to avoid the concentration camps, seeking refuge in Turkey or in the islands still under Italian control.

The German occupation, albeit short-lived, left indelible traces in the popular memory. The Dodecanese islands were starved and subjected to extreme conditions of famine, hardship and death. The quote below documents how, after the armistice, many Greek families helped the Italian soldiers to hide from raids of the *Wehrmacht*, which broke into the homes of local people.

> In 1943 there was the armistice and the end of the war. After the armistice, there were clashes between Germans and Italians. In Rhodes about fifteen hundred Italians were killed. And no

one ever really talked about it. Many were caught and deported to Germany. My mother's family hid and saved my father. When the Germans came knocking on the door in search of Italian soldiers, he came out speaking in Greek and without the military uniform. So he asked '*Ti thèlete*?' (What do you want?). So, mistaking him for a Greek, the Germans left and he was saved. Even his army comrades and the native inhabitants didn't rat on him. (Nicola, origin of the mother: South Aegean. Date of the interview: 8 June 2014)

In May 1945, the islands were liberated from German occupation and came under the administrative control of a British military protectorate. They were almost immediately allowed to run their own civil affairs, upon which the islands became informally united with Greece on 31 March 1947. In the meantime, as well as in other areas of the Hellenic country, the number of Italian soldiers greatly diminished, especially after the law 517 of 1948, issued by the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of the Justice in Athens. In fact, this law forced Italians to take Greek citizenship if they decided to stay and live in the Dodecanese islands. Article 1 of the law made provision for Italians who were resident in the Dodecanese on 10 June 1940, and their children born after that date, to be considered as Greek citizens. Article 2 stipulated that all those people included in the previous Article 1, and individuals over the age of eighteen, or unmarried regardless of age, whose usual language was Italian, were guaranteed the opportunity to choose Italian citizenship before the expiry of one year from the entry into force of the peace treaty (10 February 1947). Substantially, articles 3 and 4 of the law legally determined the final expulsion of Italians from the Dodecanese.[4] The objective pursued by the Greek government with this measure was achieved: only 400 of the 7,500 Italians living in the Aegean islands continued to live there (Michela 1949, 7–9). The operations of repatriation, not always facilitated by the Italian Government, started on ships heading toward the port of Bari for a temporary location, from which the transfer and concentration of refugees in the direction of cities, such as Florence or Civitavecchia, were then organized.

A large merchant ship, called *Campidoglio*, arrived from Italy to pick up the last Italians who wanted to return to Italy. We boarded and after many days at sea we arrived in Italy. It was very dangerous because all the Aegean Sea was mined. I remember that we moved from our village [Lindos] to the small village of Kritikà, right near Rhodes town, for the departure. Some relatives lived there and we stayed with them for a while. I remember this great ship while turning the corner to go to the port and I saw the tears of my mother, my father and my relatives … On the ship there was a large hall and we slept on camp beds. They were all Italians who returned to Italy and many mixed families. Also another family from Lindos was with us. I remember my father holding my younger sister who was a year old.

We arrived in Bari and they took us to a refugee camp with the prefabricated houses. We were there about a month. Then, we went to Civitavecchia by train. Our intention was to get closer to Rome because there was my mother's sister. (Nicola, origin of the mother: South Aegean. Date of the interview: 9 June 2014)

7.5. 'One face, one race': mixed marriages between Greeks and Italians

A considerable number of marriages between Greek women and Italian soldiers took place in the Dodecanese, both before and after the armistice. The local custom, following a matrilineal inheritance system, provided for the negotiation of the dowry before finalizing the wedding (Vernier 1984, 69). This implied the existence of arranged marriages, closely linked to the possession of goods by the family of the future bride. Thus, the spread of

marriages with Italians began gradually to undermine the traditional structure, since they were willing to get married even in the absence of dowry and, consequently, to marry girls from poor or wealthy families. Moreover, local women were flattered by such attention and fascinated by courtship techniques adopted by the Italian military.

> There was the saying of the Italian soldier who preferred to make love instead of war. My father and his other fellow soldiers usually went to get milk from a Turkish who was a neighbour of my mother and had some goats. Usually, my mother and her sisters sat on the steps outside the door. My father had been eyeing her since the first day. She was so excited about his coming. So, he fell in love with my mother. Then, he used to going to a large bar frequently, near the church, attended by Italians and the locals. There, my father made friends with a cousin of my mother. So, this cousin introduced my father to her. (Afrodite, origin of the mother: South Aegean. Date of the interview: 2 September 2014)

In addition, the Italian soldiers were willing to get married according to the Greek-Orthodox rite, although later the colonial regime was more oriented towards the Roman Catholic rite and Catholic education of the women in the island. The local male population took a dual approach to the emergence of these new marriages that undermined the old marriage custom. On the one hand, they had a patriotic feeling which led them to oppose the marriages of their daughters or sisters with foreigners and, furthermore, occupants. On the other, at a social level, they began to accept the introduction of changes by those who, in most cases, were seen as advocates of progress, work and civic order. As described by the following words of an interviewee, over time this last approach prevailed, particularly since mixed marriages were a kind of social leveller that deconstructed the traditional structure of colonial power.

> My grandfather opposed the marriage of his daughter with an Italian soldier. He was against it because my father was Italian and foreign. At that time my grandfather wasn't well and died shortly before my parents' marriage. My parents tried to move the wedding date but it wasn't possible because all the marriage documents had already arrived from Italy. Over time, things changed, and no one else opposed this marriage, also because my father was a polite and nice person. Other mixed marriages occurred in the island. (Silvia, origin of the mother: South Aegean. Date of the interview: 5 September 2014)

Both marital relations and friendship between Greeks and Italians meant that, in the collective imagination of the islanders, Italians were less and less considered as colonizers. Despite oppression and fascist foreign domination, the constant social interaction helped to mitigate the effects of the occupation and to reduce the social distance within anti-structural boundaries (Herzfeld 1991, 66; Papataxiarchis 1991, 172). All this led to the creation of the stereotype of the Italians as 'good people' (*brava gente*), summarized in the emblematic and widespread expression in Greece 'one face, one race' (*mia fàtsa, mia ràtsa*). This expression denoted not so much a somatic similarity but rather a cultural affinity between Greeks and Italians, presupposing 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 (2003, 202–203, 234–235):

> 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'.

7.6. Repatriation of Italian soldiers and Greek wives

As already mentioned, after the war, in Greece the question of marriages between Italian soldiers and Greek women remained open. These marriages also contravened military regulations and the legislation in force. Once Italian soldiers were repatriated, many Greek wives were left alone and without any particular source of income. For this reason, at the request of the Greek authorities, the British command also reserved the right to organize the repatriation of these women, since they had acquired Italian citizenship after marriage (IAYE 1945).

Regarding the repatriation of Italian soldiers present in Greece, it is appropriate to refer to the Report on operations by the Italian Armed Forces for the repatriation of prisoners of war and internees in the period 1944–1947. The first of the twenty-four annexes of the Report, first of all, specifies that an 'A high percentage of Italian military remained in the Balkans, especially in the beginning, was made up of soldiers fighting against the Germans […] who supported largely the local partisans'. Following the graphs shown in Annex 11, the trend of returns, from December 1944 to July 1945, can be reconstructed on a monthly basis. In particular, it is important to note the amount of 35,620 Italians remained in Greece up to 8 September 1943, who in December 1946 were repatriated to Italy and divided between the temporary shelter for refugees centre of Bari (4,092 people) and that of Taranto (31,528 people). Moreover, it should be borne in mind that, at the end of December 1945, the Italians who came back to their homeland were about 90% of the total (AUSSME 1947b).

8. Conclusion

This article has described and analyzed the two main push and pull factors of Greek migration to Italy in the second half of the twentieth century, namely the student migration and the migration related to the Second World War. Through the narrative reconstruction by the second-generation members, we have used the empirical material within a wider historical framework of analysis. During the fieldwork, members of the second generation were asked to tell their family history and the migration projects of their parents. The attribution and interpretation of the meaning of their narrative arose from interactions through which their life story was built. Such interactions evoked and affected the process of memory within an extensive network of resources and meanings. We therefore entrusted empathically to the narrators' memory and to their processes of elaboration, self-representation and evaluation within their family contexts. Instead of making a faithful description of the past, the people we met have reconstructed significant facts and events that their parents lived in Greece, as well as their migratory experience. Consequently, the memory is a historical product of individual experience and, as such, is not an immutable entity because it undergoes changes, reformulations and manipulations, both in thought and in speech.

During the twentieth century, the first great flow from Greece to Italy was due to the events of war. The fate of Italian civilians and military in Greece followed by their Greek wives, from the 1940s, testifies to these historical facts. Following the events related to these individuals contributes therefore to provide the appropriate historical context within which to place the study of the events themselves. In addition, it facilitates the understanding of this first great flow whose peculiar characteristics differentiate it enormously both from previous flows in the modern era and from the second and subsequent flow which mainly deals with Greek students and political dissidents.

War developments, determined by the policy choices of Fascist Italy, helped to set the scene, the conditions and the context for new Greek flows to Italy. The twenty-nine months of occupation and military administration, in a large part of the Greek territory (mainland and islands), should be added to a much longer period of protectorate that Italy imposed on the islands of the Dodecanese, as a result of the Balkan wars and the plan of the Italian foreign policy of hegemony over the Mediterranean. This first and most important flow from Greece stopped substantially in the second half of the 1940s. A new flow of Greeks towards Italy started in the 1950s, with the end of the civil war in Greece and after a slow and difficult period of democratic parliamentarism. This time, they were young students who chose Italy as their destination for study, mainly because of a complex selection process of the access system of Greek universities. It was a migratory movement which continued until the end of the 1970s, with a slow and steady decline in 1980s. There was another flow during the period of the dictatorship of the colonels in Greece (1967–1974), along with university students. They were political exiles who chose Italy as a place of refuge. Here, many of them decided to stay permanently after finding work and creating mixed families.

The history and the events of the Greek diaspora are constantly changing and are affected by both the role of internal factors and the international context, with reference to the past and present. The dramatic economic, political and social crisis, which has been hitting Greece since the spring of 2009, has brought to light a phenomenon that was considered to have ended permanently, even by scientific and academic literature (as well as by the press and the media). We are talking about massive migration of skilled labour, that is, Greek people trained at the higher education level in Greece and forced to leave their country which is unable to offer them any future career opportunities (more or less appropriate to their qualification) because of the crisis itself. In this sense, the Olympic Games held in Greece in 2004 represent the culmination of a process (which is nonlinear) that started with Greece's full-fledged membership of the European Economic Community in the early 1980s, continued with its entrance into the Eurozone in 2002, and ended with the explosion of the debt crisis in the spring of 2009. During these decades, the belief that Greece had finally gone from being a labour-exporting country to a labour-importing one, was strengthened not only by the media but also by scientific studies, by virtue of Greece's consolidated and stable economic position, among advanced and powerful countries. As in the past, Greece is experiencing again a dramatic and massive increase in emigration of young workforce, because of the debt crisis and the austerity policies. 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 (Pelliccia 2013b). Thus, the re-emergence of this phenomenon disproves too hasty judgments and too simplistic analysis

by some scholars, at a historical level. The exodus of an entire generation of young Greeks has been visibly taking place the last few years, including the brain drain, since many people leave Greece in search of better living conditions, professional growth related to their studies, salary satisfaction, and a better quality of life. It will be up to future scholars to take up the thread of historical facts, to find similarities and differences with the past, to contextualize current issues and concerns relating to mass migration and crisis, also by trying, possibly, to understand if and how relations in the international arena will change.

Notes

1. The *irredenta* extended to the north and included Macedonia, Thrace, and, even further, the north of the Balkans from the Danube. At the east, the irredentist claims referred to the Ottoman Empire territories, in particular to Asia Minor and a part of Anatolia.
2. In reference to quotes from the life stories, the interviewees' details include name, Greek administrative region of origin of their parents, and date of the interview. For privacy reasons, their surname is not included.
3. These data are confirmed by the statistics of the Bank of Greece according to which, moreover, during the academic years 1964 and 1966, in Italy there were respectively 865 and 1351 Greek students. See EKKE 1972, 62.
4. The full text of the law is available on the institutional website of the Hellenic Parliament: http://www.hellenicparliament.gr/onlinePublishing/DOD/143-170.pdf.

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Notes on contributors

Andrea Pelliccia, Socio-anthropologist and researcher at the Institute for Research on Population and Social Policies of National Research Council of Italy (IRPPS-CNR). His research interests include various issues relating to migratory processes within contexts of globalization and interculturalism such as transnational migration, ethnicity, diaspora, media and migration, and international student mobility. In recent years, his studies have focused on various aspects of contemporary Greece, particularly on Greek diaspora in Italy.

Rigas Raftopoulos, Researcher in History and critics of politics. He deals with issues related to History of Greece and Italy between the nineteenth and twentieth century (liberation struggles in Greece, civil war and occupation, military dictatorship). He teaches at the Department of Political Science of Roma Tre University (Italy).

ORCID

Andrea Pelliccia http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3864-5472
Rigas Raftopoulos http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6976-3239

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