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# Sites and Ways of Belonging to Diaspora Networks: The Case of the Greek Second Generation in Italy

Andrea Pelliccia 

Institute for Research on Population and Social Policies (CNR-IRPPS), Rome, Italy  
Email: andrea.pelliccia@irpps.cnr.it

## Abstract

To survive over time, a diaspora must create sites of belonging and micro places in which to concentrate the main elements of its “iconography” that can consolidate social networks. This article analyzes how second-generation Greeks in Italy fit into diaspora networks by investigating the ways in which they define their sense of Greekness and use their ethnic resources. The findings of field research show a weakness of (formal and informal) social network ties and the pre-eminence of the family’s role in the process of sociocultural identification and ethnic identity construction. In fact, the second generation’s “ways of belonging” and the sense of attachment to Greece have an autonomous significance and are expressed more at a familial level and less collectively. Familial socialization plays a mediating role in the process of identification and transmission of Greekness, as well as in guiding ways of employing ethnic resources, contributing to the maintenance of the diaspora.

**Keywords:** Greek diaspora; Second generation; Greekness; Diaspora network; Ethnic resources

## Introduction: Theoretical Debate on Diaspora

The term “diaspora” is derived from the Greek verb διασπείρω (*diaspeiro*, to scatter). In ancient Greece, the use of this notion stood for the dispersal of citizens of a city-state to conquered lands to colonize them (Tetlow 2005). Following the translation of the Bible into the Greek language, the term diaspora began to refer to the historical movements of Israel’s dispersed ethnic population and to connote the forced displacement caused by traumatic historical events taking, as an ideal type, the exile of Jews from their original land (Safran 1991; Barclay 2004). In its classic definition, therefore, diaspora entails the involuntary dispersal of a population sharing the same history of emigration to different locations around the world that is linked to a collective narrative of suffering and grounded in an experience of persecution and discrimination. Early discussions of the definition of diaspora were almost always firmly rooted in the concept of “homeland,” referring to the Jewish paradigmatic case and an original myth with a sacred value, implying a strong ethnic connotation (Stratton 1997).

Safran identified six criteria for diaspora (1991, 83–84): dispersal from a specific original “center”; the maintenance of a myth or collective memory of the homeland; the absence of a full assimilation in the host country; consideration of the ancestral homeland as a place of eventual return where the ideal “home” can be established; commitment directed toward the reconstruction of the ancestral homeland; and a personal or indirect relationship to the homeland capable of shaping the identity, ethnic consciousness, and solidarity of members of a diaspora. According to

Safran, the ideal type of the diaspora was the Jewish one, flanked by other sects that included all, or almost all, of the criteria illustrated: Armenian, Maghrebi, Palestinian, Cuban, Greek, Chinese, and Polish. As the diaspora debate began to expand within the social sciences by introducing other cases, definitions began to challenge the Jewish paradigm as the sole referent of the concept of diaspora.

Some scholars, such as Cohen (1997), have used the same prescriptive formula in constructing an ideal type of diaspora to encompass a wide range of phenomena. The sociologist proposed a typology of diasporas, each of which was caused by a different set of circumstances, connected to different social contexts, mythologies, and definitions of solidarity: “victim diaspora” (Jewish, Armenian, and African), “labor diaspora” (Indian, Italian, and Filipino), “imperial/colonial diaspora” (Ancient Greek, British, Portuguese), “trade diaspora” (Lebanese and Chinese), and “cultural diaspora” (Caribbean). All these types of diasporas are not mutually exclusive; on the contrary, some populations can belong to two or more diasporas, even in different periods. Furthermore, these types of diasporas may overlap and change their character over time. Some recurring features in the formulation of all these definitions are an emotional-expressive nature, the stability of the distribution of populations within the diaspora, and historical continuity across at least two generations. In other terms, using Cohen’s words, time must pass before a migration becomes a diaspora (Cohen 1997, 185). Orientation and emotional attachment to the ancestral homeland continue to mark the diaspora and, in most cases, this attachment does not interfere with the process of integration into the host society but may survive even for several generations. Diaspora can be characterized by periods of latency and activism that generally occur in response to the processes of three relevant referents: members of the diaspora, host society, and (real or imagined) homeland. Characterized by a dynamic component and fluid social processes, successive generations can acquire, lose, regain, or change the sense of diaspora over an indefinite period.

Over the past three decades, within the framework of theoretical discussions related to the social sciences, there has been a continuous debate regarding the appropriate use of the term diaspora (Basu 2005). Some scholars argue that it should be limited to the description and exile of Jews from their historic homeland, whereas its use in other contexts should be limited to a metaphorical level. Other scholars claim that it is necessary to transcend the Jewish tradition and return to the etymological use of the word and its earliest use in studies of human dispersion. The anthropologist Clifford (1994), for example, criticizes what he has defined as Safran’s “centered” model and states that while acknowledging the strong implication of Jewish history on the language of the diaspora, it is necessary to refer to the Jewish case no longer as a definitive model but as a nonnormative starting point, within a hybrid context of new global conditions. Therefore, in the various recent extensions of the term, reference to paradigmatic cases has become increasingly attenuated, leading to a real inflation of applications and interpretations. In this respect, the sociologist Brubaker (2005) speaks of a “diaspora of the diaspora”—that is, a dispersion of meanings of the term in a semantic, conceptual, and disciplinary space. In fact, social sciences have begun to include many other dispersed populations in the diaspora as well as transethnic and cross-border linguistic categories in reference to communities (Francophone, Anglophone, and Lusophone) or religious communities (Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Confucian, Huguenot, Muslim, and Catholic). The term that once described Jewish dispersion, as well as Greek or Armenian dispersion, over time began to broaden the semantic domain to include words such as immigrant, expatriate, refugee, migrant worker, exile community, community abroad, ethnic minorities, and so on (Cohen 1997; Shuval 2000; Dufoix 2008).

The “diaspora of the diaspora” has involved not only the proliferation of putative diasporas but also the spread of new terms throughout the social sciences as well as outside the scientific academy. In addition to the concrete noun “diaspora” designating a collectivity, abstract terms have emerged indicating a condition (“diasporicity” or “diasporism”), an attitude or position (“diasporic”), a process (“diasporization”), or a field of study (“diasporology”). Consequently, the risk of extending the semantic and applicative domain of the term diaspora may be that of losing its discriminating power and the ability to capture phenomena. Paradoxically, the dispersion of this notion could

mean the disappearance of the diaspora itself. The broadening of the meaning of the diaspora is the result of a paradigm shift that has prompted many social science scholars to explain ethnic relations and identity processes as the product of globalization and transnationalization. By no longer including old notions related to forced dispersal, new diaspora studies—at least as far as social disciplines are concerned—focus heavily on cross-border experiences between country of origin and destination. Such experiences refer to both the desire for ancestral return and a dense network of transnational affiliations and ties that cross the borders of nation-states.

To provide a comprehensive theoretical framework, the new notions of diaspora are thus associated with both the concepts of root and origin linked to the homeland and with cultural hybridism in the wake of “dissemination,” with the goal of simultaneously understanding the deterritorialized and fluid nature of postmodern life and the processes of local rootedness that continue to shape the existence of individuals. In fact, if aspects and dynamics of contemporary diasporas are to be fully grasped, one cannot disregard the analysis of their dynamic, fluid, and syncretic character (Mavroudi 2020), just as one cannot help but associate the term diaspora with the unlimited transnational movements of people and the mobility of diasporic capital, goods, cultural iconographies, positions, practices, or idioms (Brubaker 2005; Bauböck and Faist 2010). In an increasingly globalized and interconnected world, the new perspective of diaspora study suggests transcending the old assimilationist paradigm to focus on new strands such as transnationalism, postnationalism, hybridism, creolization, transculturalism, and postmodernity (Knott and McLoughlin 2010; Liu 2015). The intense increase in scholarly contributions on the concept of diaspora indicates not only a widespread and growing interest in these new trends related to it but also the realization of the potential that this concept expresses for the advancement of qualitatively different perspectives and viewpoints in the study of human migration.

### Contextual Information

In the light of what has been said so far, we can state that the contemporary Greek diaspora, as conceptualized within the disciplinary boundaries of the social sciences, is characterized by some aspects found in both classical and more recent definitions and has undergone, over the course of time, different stages of dispersion or rediasporization. As also described by King and Christou (2010), the Hellenic diaspora has been, and continues to be, the result of various causes that have resulted in migration movements, linked to different phases such as those of colonial and commercial settlement and intellectual-political and labor migration (Pelliccia and Raftopoulos 2020). 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 20th century on one side and the previous phenomenon of the mercantile colonies on the other, thus constituting a specific field of investigation and interpretation (Dertilis 1980; Katsiardi-Hering 1986; Ventoura 2004). 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. Regarding the contemporary Greek diaspora in Italy in the second half of the 20th century, the two main push and pull factors were the migration related to the Second World War and the student migration, sometimes related to political reasons during the period of the military dictatorship in Greece (1967–1974).

In the case of the second Greek generation in Italy, the relationship with Greece is strongly based on criteria such as emotional attachment, continuous orientation toward one’s ancestral homeland, and the universal desire to return (Pelliccia 2017a, 2018, 2019). The nationhood is closely linked to an ecumenical and transcendent Hellenism made of symbolic constructions, memories, reconfigurations of identity, and collective belonging. In this sense, language, religion, family, and kinship are seen as powerful markers defining Greeks as a whole within ethnoreligious and cultural boundaries (Scourby 1980; Kourvertaris 1997; Constantinou 1999). Indeed, diaspora, experienced either collectively or more properly as individuals, has left a trail of historical memory by creating

new maps of desire and attachment. This can result in conceiving Greek national identity in rigid ethnocultural terms, and the “ancient glorious past” is thus incorporated into the conception of the nation as its genealogical and cultural cradle (Triandafyllidou, Gropas, and Kouki 2013). On the other hand, the emergence of hybrid forms of identity and the spread of transnational practices constitute further fundamental aspects of second-generation diaspora (Pelliccia 2017b). Hybridism and transnationalism can be functional in defining concepts such as “roots” and “home” in a series of significant shifts by challenging the notion of self-centered cultures, affirming an idea of identity that is not reducible to a uniform and stable configuration. In fact, Greek identity is “in transition,” constantly performed, negotiated, and coconstructed. It appears to be not a predefined and durable entity but a result of an ongoing and intergenerational dynamic process (Abatzopoulou 1997; Christou 2001; Anthias 2002; Angouri 2012; Koukoutsaki-Monnier 2012), also as a result of its adaptation to social conditions, needs of the society, and the changing international context (Triandafyllidou and Veikou 2002). The lived experiences and spatiotemporal imaginaries of members of the Greek diaspora often revolve around the idea of home through relationships with homeland; the existence of multiple homes; different practices in building a home; and the intersections between home, identity, belonging, and attachment (Christou and King 2010, 2015; Pelliccia 2018).

Members of the Greek diaspora, both first-generation and later ones, in the numerous Italian cities might converge in a whole set of micro places that they recognize as their own. Each of these might act as a center in a territory where sociospatial proximities suppress spatiotemporal distances (Prevelakis 1996), where the Greek diaspora is nothing more than a sociospatial network appointed to aggregate together places of memory and presence. If a diaspora wants to survive over time, transmitting its identity structure to a subsequent generation, it must create places for periodic cultural, religious, or political gatherings in which to concentrate the main elements of its “iconography” through visible and palpable symbols that can consolidate social networks and preserve them for as long as possible (Gottmann 1952, 219–221). These places, where the main components of Greek iconography can be found, include local communities, Greek Orthodox churches, associations, and all those spaces that perpetuate memory such as restaurants, monuments, media, and so on.

This article seeks to contribute to studies on the Greek diaspora in the world and to the increase of qualitatively different perspectives and viewpoints in the study of human migration. Specifically, this article will analyze how second-generation Greek members in Italy fit into the Greek network and sociocultural fabric constituted by Hellenic Communities and institutions, a structured associationism, the Greek Orthodox Church, and all interpersonal ties that share Greek origins. The process of sociocultural identification and identity construction will then be analyzed, investigating the ways in which second-generation members use their ethnic resources and define their sense of Greekness. This is followed by an examination of whether it is a collectivized community within a uniform and homogenizing category of ethnic substantialism, whether, as reported by a large body of literature, Greek associations or the Orthodox Church still really act as micro places with the purpose of keeping the diaspora alive (Saloutos 1964; Scourby 1980; Georgakas 1987; Psomiades 1987; Kourvertaris 1997; Constantinou 1999; Moskos 1999; Komondouros and McEntee-Atalianis 2007; McDuling and Barnes 2012), or whether there are other main agents for the maintenance of Greekness and the preservation of Greek diaspora.

## Methods and Sociodemographic Data

In identifying and establishing the reference target, all those people with at least one parent of Greek nationality and who currently live in Italy were included. Following a sociological perspective, it was also decided to take into consideration not only those who were born in Italy but also all those individuals who came to Italy at an age no older than six years—that is, at a preschool age. This decision was motivated by definitional criteria that consider this category of people practically

indistinguishable from the definition of second generation, despite being registered as born abroad by the population census statistics.

The executive phase of the field research involved the Greek institutions in Italy: The Embassy of Greece, numerous Greek consulates, and the Federation of Hellenic Communities and Brotherhoods in Italy.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the representatives of some Italian-Greek associations/foundations that are active also on the Internet have also been involved as key informants. In addition to 256 structured questionnaires, 100 in-depth interviews were collected during 2015. In this article, the research results refer only to in-depth interviews and thus not to structured questionnaire interviews. Each interview was conducted face to face and lasted several hours. Some were conducted through more than one meeting. Respondents were asked what their degree of affiliation with Greek institutions and “sites of belonging” in Italy is. They were asked whether they are members of a Greek Community or other cultural, social, or religious associations in Italy and how they relate to them. In addition, it was asked if they participate in Greek sociocultural initiatives, whether they attend the Greek Orthodox Church, and whether they have any form of relationship with other people of Greek origin. Moreover, the ways in which they use their ethnic resources—such as the Greek language—and define their own sense of Greekness were investigated. All interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Being from a limited and nonrepresentative sample, the results do not reflect the distribution of characteristics of the target group and cannot be generalized to the entire second Greek generation in Italy. Snowball sampling was found to be extremely useful and highly effective. This technique allowed for a better identification of the interviewees and, at the same time, for a conscious selection of individuals from which to obtain useful data and insights. By adopting the criterion of theoretical saturation, a “progressive construction of the sample” (Glaser and Strauss 1967) was achieved by starting several chains among the interviewees and thus obtaining a certain diversification of the sampling units. Furthermore, the identification of some privileged informants made it possible to reduce the times of the executive phase but, above all, made it possible to break down the many obstacles in creating a climate of trust, socialization, and mutual understanding. The in-depth interviews were collected in some Italian cities in formal and informal places from more symbolically and concretely effective and protected environments, such as homes or workplaces of interviewees, to more neutral and functional locations such as bars, squares, and restaurants. In addition, where possible direct observation and overt participant observation was used within the workplaces of interviewees and during their recreational and cultural events as festivals, concerts, religious gatherings, and book presentations. Observation thus allowed for a greater understanding of individuals during their daily lives and for the creation of a dimension of shared meanings in the moment of negotiation of meanings. The research was based on informed consent. The involvement of participants was entirely voluntary, and anonymity was maintained.

Regarding the sociodemographic characteristics of the Greek second generation involved in this research, the data show a slight gap between the male and female components and a prevalence of the youth age group of 10 and 34 years old compared with those aged 35–59 and over 60 years. Regarding the 10–34 age group, it is important to note that almost all are adults and do not live with their parents. In fact, only a very small minority are younger than 18 years old, so this does not affect the data analysis significantly. This means that most people interviewed would not have been influenced by the views of their parents, so their opinions are largely their own. Regarding marital status, considering the young age of most of the interviewees, more than half are single and have no children. In most cases, the reference target is made up of children of mixed marriages, almost always one parent born in Greece and one born in Italy. With reference to place of birth, the majority was born in Italy and a minority born in Greece or other countries. Taking into consideration individuals born in Greece, the main *Periféries* (territorial-administrative subdivisions) of origin are Attica and the southern Aegean, followed by central Macedonia, eastern Macedonia and Thrace, western Greece, and Thessaly. In terms of citizenship, well over half hold exclusively Italian citizenship versus those with dual citizenship and those who are only Greek

citizens. A final observation concerns the territorial distribution of residence, pointing out that a wide regional coverage has been achieved. Indeed, Italy's main regions are represented, and both local Communities/associations and Greek Orthodox churches are present. However, half of the people interviewed live in the regions of central Italy in contrast to the lower proportion of interviewees residing in northern and southern Italy.

## Findings

### *Weakness of Social Network Ties and The Family's Role in the Cultural Process of Greekness*

One of the starting hypotheses was to consider Hellenic Communities and all other forms of associationism, more or less institutional, as vital places of aggregation appointed to strengthen the networks of Greek conationals, contributing to the creation and circulation of social capital deriving from common origin and symbolic reference to an ancestral homeland.

The field research revealed a certain weakness in the ties with institutional and associational circles, which is concretely expressed in low membership and the absence of the need to refer to more structured networks. Overall, there are relatively few memberships or affiliations with a Hellenic Community or other Greek or Italo-Greek association, to which must often be added the lack of intention to be part of them or even the lack of knowledge of their existence. Going into detail, a first observation concerns the generational gap related to the age: the low affiliation is by far more prevalent among the youth component (10–34 years) than among those over 60. A further consideration is that among the residents in the regions of central Italy, there is a lower participation than among those who live in northern and southern Italy, probably due to a lower presence of Hellenic communities in central Italy.

Making an overview of the formal communities in which the interviewees are enrolled, the Hellenic Community of Brescia and Cremona, the Hellenic Cultural Centre of Milan, the Historical Community of Orthodox Greeks in Venice, the Greek Eastern Community of Trieste, and the Hellenic Community of Emilia Romagna appear for northern Italy. Regarding central Italy, the only community is the Hellenic Community of Rome and Latium, and in the southern regions the interviewees are enrolled in the Hellenic Community of Naples and Campania; the Hellenic Community of Brindisi, Lecce, and Taranto; the Hellenic Community "Trinacria" of Palermo, and the Hellenic Community of the Strait (Calabria and Sicily). To a lesser extent, some responded that they belong to associations linked to traditional dance (Opa Opa, Italian-Greek cultural association Hellas, Terpsichori), the Greek-Orthodox church (Together for Athos Association), humanistic studies (National Association of neo-Greek studies), or they belong to other more generic cultural associations such as the "Italo-Hellenic Association The Star of Rhodes" and the "Italo-Hellenic Association Grecia Salentina." Finally, it is interesting to report that, among the second-generation members involved in this research, some hold significant positions within communities and associations (president, vice president, secretary) or have close family ties with people who work in Greek institutions (embassy, consulate, Federation of Hellenic Communities and Brotherhoods in Italy). In all these cases, it can be asserted that the Greek network is expressed as a form of sponsorship to the point of generating a condition of centrality in the sphere of professional promotion linked to social capital.

Concerning affiliation to institutional networks and associations, also with reference to Greek social and cultural initiatives in Italy, there is not a large level of participation. In fact, there are few users and actors of Greek participatory and cultural processes. Despite the low participation, we are in any case in the presence of a wide and heterogeneous range of initiatives, from events or activities for the promotion and dissemination of Greek culture (music, dance, cuisine, literature, cinema, theatre, etc.) to those related to traditional festivities, such as the cutting of the *Vasilòpita* (typical New Year's cake) and Easter, within local communities or the Greek Orthodox Church. Again, the variables of age and territorial residence, alongside that of citizenship, seem to have a certain

influence on the results of this study. Indeed, lower participation is recorded within the youth component, among residents of central Italian regions, and among those who do not hold Greek citizenship.

A further exploratory area of research concerned the microsocial, spontaneous, and largely informal sphere based on bonds of friendship or simple acquaintance outside more properly formal and institutional circuits. Second-generation members were asked about their degree of frequentation of other individuals with Greek origin. One of the starting hypotheses was to consider the frequency of other people having the same national origin as an opportunity to recover, reelaborate, or strengthen their mixed or “hyphenated” identity by resituating their Greekness and symbolic categories within everyday life. Again, the results show a rather significant weakness of ties. Nearly half of the people interviewed claim to associate with few people of Greek origin, supported by those who have cultivated no relationships at all, and relative to those who associate with enough and many people. Unlike the results regarding institutional/association affiliation and participation in sociocultural initiatives, we see an inverse correlation with respect to age. As with increasing age, the microsocial field based on friendship ties with other Italian Greeks decreases. In addition, citizenship consistently affects the presence of the informal social network.

The Greek Orthodox Church represents a further important site of belonging and micro place for the Greek diaspora. Unlike the Catholic community, which identifies itself in a universal and transterritorial church, the Greek Orthodox Church, like the other Orthodox churches (Bulgarian, Russian, Romanian, etc.), is distinguished by being autocephalous, strongly rooted to its territory of origin and own language. Playing a vital role since the Byzantine era and, preponderantly, during the *Turkocratia* (Ottoman domination), the Christian Orthodox church has constituted the heart of Greek identity, and Orthodox Greekness has become one of the most enduring aspects of the Greek diaspora. From a historical perspective, Greeks abroad, after reaching a certain numerical threshold, have given rise to communities that have developed precisely around the church and, together with language, it has been the one constant element both in time and space, thus becoming the common denominator of Greek culture (Scourby 1980, 44; Constantinou 2007, 254). With respect to language, the church has consistently contributed to its maintenance: the liturgy is in the Greek language and knowledge of Greek is an important requirement for participation in the life of the church which, in turn, reinforces the language by practicing it in various forms (modern, Hellenistic, etc.). Starting from the modern age, in particular from the collapse of Constantinople, in many Italian cities (first of all Venice, Trieste, Naples, and Livorno), the formation of Greek-Orthodox churches has reflected community traditions referring to a metaphysical place steeped in a strong secular experience. Even today, historic churches such as that of St. George’s in Venice or St. Peter and Paul’s of the Greeks in Naples are not only places of worship where one’s faith can be strengthened; they have the function of consolidating one’s identity as spaces for aggregation and socialization for many Greeks. For the second generation, they could represent a highly effective institutional area for the identity-building process rooted in a common past, the perception of shared cultural meanings, and the configuration of community values within the diaspora. They can, moreover, offer ample opportunities to generate new connections with the homeland, reinvigorate the collective sense of belonging, and produce new identities.

With respect to the interviewees who declare to profess a religion, slightly less than half are of the Christian Orthodox faith. Going into more specific detail, the age has a strong influence: more orthodox are recorded among the youth component of the 10–34 age group than those over 60. Other variables such as geographical area, type of parent, and citizenship also play a very significant role. There is, indeed, a greater presence of Orthodox Christians among residents of southern and northern Italian regions, among those with Greek fathers, and among holders of Greek citizenship. It is important to point out that being a believer does not necessarily mean practicing and attending church. Overall, considering both believers and nonbelievers, the interviewees do not usually attend the Greek Orthodox church. Very few claim to do it assiduously compared with the majority who say they have never been there in their lifetime or who claim to go sporadically. A final and very

relevant observation is that even among those baptized with a Christian-Orthodox rite, the church does not have a religious appeal: very few people declare to attend it regularly. There are numerous narrative fragments from the in-depth interviews collected from which it emerged that the (low) attendance of the Greek Orthodox church is closely linked not so much to reasons dictated by faith but to a community spirit that leads the second generation to consider this place as a space of socialization in which to develop a sense of collective belonging.

*I attend the Greek church on a few occasions but more due to a general belonging. When we were younger, we used to go at Easter or Christmas but for tradition, as a symbolic gesture, not for religious beliefs. (Matteo, 25 years old, mother's origin: Thessaloniki)*

Therefore, the results presented so far show a scarce involvement on the part of the second generation in Greek institutions and associations as well as the presence of a poorly structured social network. In addition, with respect to the degree of community organization, numerous in-depth interviews denote a clear divide with the first generation, more embedded in the Greek social fabric. This phenomenon can be explained by multiple factors. At the macro level, a first variable could be a higher degree of settlement maturity of the Greek diaspora than in the past, which would imply a lower attachment to the common ethnic-national belonging. At the micro level, it could be traced back to further indicators of stabilizing social inclusion such as a certain perception of cultural "closeness," being children of a mixed couple, and the absence of a real need for mutual support. But what, above all, emerges is that the attachment to Greece occurs more on a particularistic and family level. Indeed, the family is the main agent for the maintenance of Greekness and the preservation of cultural traits through, for example, as we shall see later, the transmission of the language of origin. The management of processes of identification and belonging in relation to the "sense of origins" is activated precisely within the family context (in the nuclear or extended sense), understood as a sort of multifaceted cultural theatre. Based on a strong orientation imbued with particularism and familism, family socialization contributes to determining and shaping lives "translocated" to the ancestral homeland, representing a focal point for the analysis of the identity process of second-generation members, as family is configured as a place where the process of social acquisition of information about their parents' land takes shape. Consequently, the cumulative effect of the action of family and particularistic relationships produces a displaced identity and the absence of the search for Greekness embedded in the institutional setting. Therefore, we are in the presence of more concentrated and exclusive networks based on family belonging within which the second generation can (re)discover the ancestral homeland as a source of the "true" Greekness, which is not available through other agencies of socialization and acculturation. Greek identity is therefore defined thanks to these intrafamily placements and through the position held within them. The participation in Greek sociocultural events or festivities often occurs through the intermediary role of families. As can be seen from numerous narrative fragments of the people interviewed, it is the family that builds the cultural and social pieces that make up the diaspora, becoming the place in which to symbolically recall the place of origin, strengthen their Greek identity, and consolidate social networks. For second-generation members, sharing interfamily situations means mapping a cultural geography and avoiding the risk of losing their Greekness through the creation of a new large "family" in Italy.

*Every year I celebrate Greek Orthodox Easter with my family. Sometimes we get to celebrate it in Greece with Greek relatives but, almost always, we stay in Italy. The best thing, however, is that we meet with other families like ours, with Greek origins. We are like a big family. And we do exactly what you would do in Greece: we paint eggs red and then break them at the table saying "Christòs anèsti" [Jesus is risen]; we dance and we eat lamb. These are the moments when I feel Greek, and this is what I will do when I have children. (Giorgo, 30 years old, father's origin: Athens)*



### *Ways of Using Ethnic Resources and Defining Greekness*

First- and second-generation Greeks may manifest specific levels of ethnicity and different ways of using ethnic resources. A valid starting point in examining the dynamics of the cultural identification process can be the distinction between “ways of being” and “ways of belonging” (Levitt and Glick Shiller 2004). Ways of being, which we attribute here to the first generation, refer to social relationships and practices that imply concrete participation and commitment within certain contexts made up of institutions, communities, associations, and so on. Although they affect the behavioral dimension, they do not require a precise awareness or cultural identification on the part of individuals through the use of cultural labels by virtue of the fact that certain values and codes are deeply incorporated and introjected. Ways of belonging, specific instead of the second generation, allude to concrete practices and visible actions that respond to a conscious connection with a particular culture. Combining awareness and action of identity, ways of belonging need to highlight a belonging by resorting to symbolic operations as well.

The recurring questions that the second generation asks themselves have to do with the conceptualization of their cultural identity and the authenticity of Greekness: “Who is Greek? How does one become Greek? What does one do to be Greek? Is it necessary to be born and raised in Greece, speak the Greek language, and embrace the Greek Orthodox faith?” Often, a response to these questions occurs precisely through the manifestation of ways of belonging—that is, those behaviors and actions implying a sense of recognition and awareness in public contexts of ethnicity such as, for example, workplaces, sites of belonging, and micro places. It is here that the second generation can structure and shape their own cultural identity up to the point of recognizing their own Greekness via use of their own ethnic resources.

Overall, the people who took part in this field research are characterized by high educational credentials and highly qualified professional backgrounds, and many of these revolve around the Greek reality in Italy. Among the respondents appear Greek restaurant owners, import-export entrepreneurs between Italy and Greece, journalists and foreign correspondents for Greek television, teachers of modern Greek language and literature, musicians, and traditional dance teachers. Others work as translators/interpreters or scientific researchers dealing with issues related to the contemporary Greek situation or as tour guides. In all these professional fields, the second generation has the opportunity not only to exploit their cultural and social capital accumulated over the years but also to recognize and reaffirm their Greekness outside the motherland. In symbolically recalling the place of origin, second-generation Greeks acquire an awareness that is useful in developing their ethnicity and being in the world, marking the sense of belonging and common feeling. The ways of belonging are therefore closely related to maintaining the deposit of sociocultural capital and strengthening ties with the land of the parents that materialize in the extension of the ancestral land in Italy.

Greek restaurants constitute another diasporic micro place where second-generation members can meet and strengthen their network system, develop ways of belonging, and employ ethnic resources. From a cultural point of view, they represent a place of symbolic transnationalism where, in addition to the importation of food products from Greece, specific atmospheres are reconstructed and a series of cultural consumptions and representations of national identities embodied in the food, in the music, and in dance *alà ellinikà* are represented. In addition, within these restaurants, some aspects related to forms of ethnicization of the labor market can be found. The Greek restaurant produces a well-defined employment niche and an ethnically connoted place in which there is an almost exclusive presence of Greek personnel and where specific professional skills are required, such as those of the chef who must know perfectly the recipe for *moussaka* [a Greek eggplant- or potato-based dish] and those of the musician who must have a specific musical background to offer during the course of the weekend evenings. In other words, we are in the presence of a network understood, referring to the Polanyan concept of “embeddedness,” almost as a sort of self-referential enclave embodied in a system of strong social ties and as a

significant employment opportunity. In addition to being spaces of socialization and symbolic transnationalism where, along with the importation of food products from Greece, a specific cultural geography is reconstructed, they are places where the interconnection between cultural practices and ethnicity can be identified in Bourdieu's (1977) "habitus" as an embodiment of social meanings that is concretized through interaction with an entire symbolically structured environment.

The presence of tangible elements, such as Greek food, music, and dances, constitutes an effective tool for the process of identifying and affirming one's Greekness. Indeed, second-generation members who engage catering activities, who organize events directed at celebrating particular festivities and the promotion of Greek culture, or who enliven weekend evenings as musicians and dancers in Greek restaurants can explicitly declare a sense of "authenticity" of their Greekness. In doing so, they build a positive self-image, choosing and negotiating ways to assert their identity and to be perceived as they wish. Unlike the "real" Greeks—that is, the first generation—they must prove their ethnicity not only with respect to the "other" but also for their own identity (Panagakos 2003, 206). However, this Greekness must be continuously reconstructed, reproduced, and reaffirmed because it is not an ontologically immutable element but is the result of negotiations and symbolic interpretations. Through the implementation of these visible and concrete practices, second-generation members can continually and consistently define themselves as "true" and "authentic" Greeks in the full knowledge of being able to be recognized as such by both a Greek and an Italian public. Moreover, as not mere interpreters but active receivers of a cultural heritage transmitted by their parents, this component of the second generation contributes to the perpetuation of symbolic traditions, ritual interactions, and memories embedded in the Greek diaspora.

*One of the things I like to do is to go to Greek restaurants and dance when there is live music. There I feel like I am in Greece with all those typical Greek tastes, smells, sounds. I really like the dances and I keep learning them. I often take my Italian friends, and they really understand there that I am Greek. When they see me dancing in traditional clothing and singing all the songs, they recognize me as a real Greek. And I am proud of that. (Maria, 42 years old, mother's origin: Thessaloniki)*

As already mentioned, a further ethnic resource and foundation of Greek identity is the language. In addition to representing a communication tool, it is a crucial indicator of the robustness and vitality of a diaspora. Greek communities abroad have a strong reputation for successful language maintenance (Tamis, Gauntlett, and Petrou 1993), and this argument applies to the Greek diaspora in Italy as well. In fact, from the in-depth interviews collected during the research, a consistent command of the Greek language emerged: many declare to be native speakers or to have an excellent/good knowledge of Greek relative to those who claim to have a fair or sufficient level and those who say to have no language skills at all. Going into more detail, variables such as age, gender, and geographical area of residence have a rather significant influence on language skills. In the first case, we are in the presence of a high inverse correlation, as with increasing age there is a lower level of knowledge of the Greek language. Regarding gender, the greatest gap is recorded among those who claim to have no language skills, more among men than among women. With reference to geographical area of residence, we see significant discrepancies: the highest rate of Greek language proficiency is found among residents in northern regions relative to that of those living in southern and central Italy. Citizenship also has a bearing on Greek proficiency. More holders of Greek citizenship declare that they have a high degree of linguistic knowledge than do those who are only Italian citizens. Finally, a last interesting observation concerns the typology of parents, as linguistic skills do not seem to depend on having a Greek father or mother despite that a higher share of native speakers is found among the second generation with a Greek mother than among those with a Greek father.

In addition to the variables considered so far, side by side with others such as demographics and social status, one of the indicators of the linguistic vitality of a diasporic community is the role of the institutions in promoting a language (Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor 1977). Both in the past and to this day, almost all Hellenic Communities in Italy, together with the Greek Orthodox Church, have made enormous efforts to encourage new generations to learn the language of their parents. This has been done through the establishment of Greek language and culture schools supported by the Greek Ministry of Education, which sends tenured teachers to Italy to teach the language. Alongside them is a host of native Greek teachers who have lived in Italy for a long time or Italian teachers who have studied neo-Greek at universities in Italy.

*I attended Greek school at the Hellenic Community of Rome and Lazio. I started at about eight–nine years old and finished at fifteen, when I went to Venice in the Navy. At the school I got the certificates alpha 1-2 and beta 1-2. It was very helpful because you get to keep ties with the language, and then this school teaches you to write because as far as you can travel and speak Greek at home, it is not easy to write it. And then at the school I met many people: Cypriots, Greeks, Italian-Greeks. (Loukas, 20 years old, father's origin: Kalithea)*

Additional interesting observations derived from the in-depth interviews and related to the learning of the Greek language concern the acquisition of Greek in the extended family, thanks to some relative who came to Italy from Greece; the presence of a hybrid language, the result of a mixtures between Italian and Greek linguistic elements; and finally, for those who have completed classical high school studies, the positive influence of the ancient Greek language and literature on the process of constructing and reinforcing Greekness.

*When I was born my mother had a precarious employment and did not have much time to devote to me. So, an aunt came from Greece to help her and take care of me when my mother worked until I was about three years old. She only knew Greek, and so she spoke to me in Greek. So, I learned Greek first and then Italian. (Danai, 28 years old, mother's origin: Athens)*

However, in the wake of the previously described low adhesion to institutional sites of belonging, few report attending language schools within the church or Communities. Once again, family socialization plays a crucial role. More than half, indeed, point to the family of origin as an agent of language learning. Fewer cases are related to the acquisition of Greek as self-taught, at courses organized by Italian institutions, and other paid courses. From the analysis made so far, we can therefore affirm the existence of a strong ethnolinguistic vitality and a very positive attitude toward the Greek language on the part of the second Greek generation in Italy. In addition, these results invalidate the theory that sees language loss as a consequence of mixed marriages (Kapardis and Tamis 1988, 71), as almost all of the research participants do not have a spouse with Greek citizenship and, moreover, are themselves children of mixed couples. As in many other countries of the Greek diaspora (Barnes 2012; McDuling and Barnes 2012), language vivification allows for the transmission of a segment of cultural heritage to second and subsequent generations. The Greek language, if maintained, could strengthen ties with the country of origin and at the same time reflect the preservation of those ties. As we have seen, bilingualism is thus a phenomenon that is crucially linked to family relations and influences communication between generations. For the children of Greek immigrants, the Greek language is a part of the family history along the process of selective acculturation that involved the acquisition of ethnic resources as well as the preservation of identity codes and references. Ways of belonging manifest here in all those acts of identity that create emotional connections with Greek culture and mark a sense of belonging such as the conscious choice to enhance bilingual skills, to practice Greek in the family, to attend a Greek language and culture course at institutional sites, and so on. Furthermore, language skills represent an opportunity to be exploited as an ethnic resource. Indeed, in addition to contributing to the perpetuation

of the Greek diaspora, they produce cultural and social capital, the use of which has allowed many of the research participants to exploit or improve their opportunities in the professional sphere. All work activities involving a close connection with Greece and the fluent use of the Greek language (translators/interpreters, journalists and foreign correspondents for television, scientific researchers, teachers of modern Greek language and literature, and tour guides) derive from this process of bilingual and bicultural socialization, and it is functional to the productive realization in professional terms. Thus, the Greek language is placed in the background of existential everyday life and acts as a resource linked not only to choices dictated by pride of roots and family memory but also by communicative needs associated with one's work. It becomes clear, therefore, how, from a simple intrafamily means of communication, the mother tongue is transformed into a powerful tool that is not fossilized and restricted to family uses and domains only.

*My first words in Greek were spoken in my family. Then I attended the Greek Community language course but only for a year because I was still very young and I didn't feel at ease. So, I continued to practice it at home talking to my father who also gave me a Greek grammar, and therefore I continued as a self-taught. I wanted at all costs to learn it well and speak it like my father. Today this has been useful to me because it allows me to read in Greek for the work I do [scientific researcher] and also to consult books in libraries in Greece. (Giovanni, 39 years old, father's origin: Rhodes)*

A final reflection concerns how Greek identity is intertwined with other (multiple) belongings. As highlighted by other studies (Quassoli and Dimitriadis 2019), negative experiences due to structural eventualities can lead to renegotiation of cultural belonging, construction of boundary lines, and reinforcement of the attachment to a specified country. In reference to this research, it is interesting to note how the Greek debt crisis of 2008 has generated an ambivalence of positions. On one hand, several members of the second generation have expressed a strong critical attitude toward EU policies and, in small part, toward the last successive governments in Greece due to the level of corruption, tax evasion, or cronyism; this reinforced an anti-European stance and a sense of Greekness in political terms in light of the dual membership of two southern European countries (Greece and Italy). This could be linked to the finding that some interviewees hold different opinions regarding European integration according to their national identities, self-identification, self-consciousness, and social belonging and that the EU is less perceived as a concrete community of citizens and instead more as an abstract entity. The symbolization of this crisis has had a crucial effect on the collective European identity. The Greek crisis and the economic turmoil in the eurozone have uncovered not only the weaknesses and vulnerabilities of economic governance of the euro area but also the fragility of the idea of a collective European identity. On the other hand, for other interviewees the debt crisis has generated a more cosmopolitan orientation and belonging within a transnational perspective rather than the question of changing the intensity of belonging by producing a hostile stance.

*With respect to the issue of the crisis in Greece, I was quite critical of this country because of the level of corruption, individualism, tax evasion, the absence of the sense of collectivity. Of course, when I saw all the social consequences of this crisis all the anger against the European Union came out because it is destroying democracy, the social pact between state and citizens, and between European institutions and citizens. Maybe we really should go beyond the borders of Europe; we have to go beyond a limited belonging because we are citizens of the world; I feel I have many belonging besides the Greek one; I live in Italy, but at the same time I am in Greece and all over the world (Dimitri, 42 years old, father's origin: Tsakoni)*

## Conclusion

This article analyzed the degree to which second-generation Greek members frequent institutions and “sites of belonging,” investigating the ways in which they use their ethnic resources and define their sense of Greekness. The analysis of the process of sociocultural identification and identity construction allows us to understand how “diasporic landscapes” (Christou and King 2010) are experienced, imagined, mediated, and negotiated by the second generation in a dimension of real territorial place and, at the same time, in a context based on a symbolic dimension. The study of the social and cultural network of the children of Greek migrants is also a privileged way to observe how social relations intervene in structuring Greekness through an interactive and dynamic approach.

Institutions and sites of belonging can act as material and symbolic arenas endowed with the role of strengthening diaspora networks and preserving national consciousness and nurturing and fostering the sociocultural cohesion of Greeks abroad. Both the first and subsequent generations can attend a whole set of micro places that they recognize as their own in many Italian cities. Each of these micro places acts as a center in a territory where sociospatial proximities suppress spatio-temporal distances (Prevelakis 1996), where the Greek diaspora is nothing more than a sociospatial network appointed to aggregate together places of memory and presence.

As we have seen, although there are differentiations with respect to the variables taken into consideration, a significant result that emerged from the research is a relative weakness of ties with institutional and associational circles for the second Greek generation in Italy. This result is combined with the low interest in participating in Greek sociocultural initiatives and a rather low degree of frequentation of other individuals with Greek origin.

These findings lead us to reflect on the future of the Greek diaspora in Italy—that is, on its ability to survive over time with the succession of generations. Such reflection should also be made in light of the not insignificant progressive decrease in migration flows from Greece and the numerosity of Greek citizens in Italy as well as the emergence of cultural hybridisms capable of deconstructing all those identity packages of an imagined community and an essentialist image anchored to national consciousness within postmodern contexts (Pelliccia 2017b).

In contrast to the findings of other previous studies and research on the Greek diaspora (Saloutos 1964; Scourby 1980; Georgakas 1987; Psomiades 1987; Kourvertaris 1997; Constantinou 1999; Moskos 1999; Komondouros and McEntee-Atalianis 2007; McDuling and Barnes 2012), the second-generation Greek members involved in this study do not make a special effort to vivify all those places where the main components of Greek iconography can be found including local communities, Greek Orthodox churches, associations, and all those spaces that perpetuate the memory and presence of the diaspora, at least in its universal dimension as a collective entity. Rather, their ways of belonging and sense of attachment to Greece have an autonomous significance and are expressed at a more particularistic and familial level. Indeed, familial socialization plays a mediating role in the process of identification, transmission, and maintenance of Greekness. Thus, we can state that the Greek diaspora escapes an image of a collectivized community within a uniform and homogenizing category of ethnic substantialism.

From a social-analytical perspective, the orientation toward Greece does not materialize in structured forms of internal cohesion capable of aggregating Italian Greeks into real ethnic networks. In their individual irreducibilities, the people involved in the research do not feel the need to relate to institutional and more structured Greek networks. The attenuation, compared with that of their parents who emigrated from Greece, of the dependence on a broader Greek network can be traced to a greater degree of settlement maturity of the Greek diaspora than in the past, the absence of a real need for social support and ethnic solidarity, and the complete absence of a process of social exclusion present instead in other ethnic-national groups in Italy. Rather, the orientation toward the homeland of their parents is expressed in the search for some cultural traits of ethnicity outside the more properly formal circuits, such as language. In the face of low adherence and participation in the institutional realities in Italy, the research findings show a high level of Greek

language proficiency and linguistic socialization. As a precious ethnic resource deriving from family contexts, language constitutes an expression of cultural identity and an important element of the social capital inscribed in the professional field. In addition, linguistic vivification implies the passing of an integral part of the cultural heritage to the second and subsequent generations, contributing to the perpetuation of the Hellenic diaspora. In this sense, a strong ethnolinguistic vitality and a positive attitude toward Greek language learning represent, albeit partially, a critical element for the survival of the diaspora abroad, reinforcing the sense of Greekness and being at the same time a reflection of the maintenance of Greekness itself. Indeed, as Mavroudi states (2020), homeland language discloses different imaginations and emotions around what it means to be, feel, and belong in diaspora.

In conclusion, it will certainly be of the utmost interest to investigate the modes of social and cultural reception by future Greek generations in Italy pertaining to forms of internal community organization, sites of belonging and micro places as possible identity references, the employment of ethnic resources, the definition of a sense of belonging, and the elaboration of Greekness. The real challenge of the survival of the Greek diaspora in its various forms lies in these instances and reflections.

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## Note

- 1 The Hellenic Communities in Italy still represent a rather important point of reference in the institutional milieu. The first meeting between the Hellenic communities in Italy was held in Bologna in September 1988, on the initiative of the Hellenic Community of Emilia Romagna. On that occasion, the foundations were laid for the creation of the Federation of Hellenic Communities and Brotherhoods in Italy (FHCBI), whose birth was made official in June 1991, in Milan, where the first Congress was organized. The numerous objectives of the FHCBI include the promotion of relations among the Communities; the coordination of relations between the Communities and Greece; the development of their contacts in the social, cultural, tourist, artistic and sporting fields; and the promotion of the dissemination of culture and teaching of the Greek language. The FHCBI has thus become the point of connection for all the Hellenic communities scattered throughout Italy, constituting a fundamental social, cultural, and civil intermediary between Greece and Italy as well as a facilitator of relations between Greek citizens and their various interlocutors.

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