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Greeks of Alexandria: Time, Place and Identity through the Visual
Representations of a Community in Transition

by Eirini Chrysocheri

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Department of Anthropology

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Statement of originality
Abstract
Acknowledgements
Note on the text
Table of contents

Statement of originality

I, Eirini Chrysocheri, confirm that the research included within this thesis is my own work and that where it has been carried out in collaboration with, or supported by others, this is duly acknowledged below and my contribution indicated. Previously published material is also acknowledged.

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Abstract

The thesis, based on anthropological fieldwork conducted in Alexandria (Egypt) from 2011 to 2012, focuses on the Greek Alexandrian community, a socially and territorially bounded urban diaspora entity, which through institutions, spatial arrangements and face-to-face interactions articulates a sense of connection to place through claims regarding a historically continuous socio-spatial connection to both Alexandria (and Egypt) and Greece.

The thesis draws on notions of time and space as a framework for discussing the social dynamics of the Greek Alexandrian community in relation to the complex context of social, economic and political transformations it has experienced over the last 60 years. The aim is to explore culturally defined concepts of identity and memory among Greek Alexandrians, particularly in relation to the major social, political and economic events that followed the Egyptian revolution of 1952, causing significant social and spatial transformations within the Greek Alexandrian community. These changes altered prevailing concepts of public and private space and affected the possibilities of successful inter-generational transmission of values and identities. As perceptions and practices explored in the thesis differ, depending on community role – leaders versus members – but also on age, the concept of generation is used to examine the diverse ways in which the past, present and future are variously understood and confronted.

Changing notions of Greek Alexandrian identity are explored by focusing not only on the community's narrative constructs but also on the visual and material objects that members of the community considered to be meaningful. A wide range of ethnographic material was examined, from narratives, texts and interviews, to visual data such as photographs, videos, films, pictures, and material elements such as urban buildings and other spatial arrangements that are recognized as being central to the community. These diverse elements are brought together in the discussion of collaboration with research participants, which resulted in an exhibition on the history of the community. The exhibition became the means

through which interactions across the community's people and places unfolded, diverse narratives and sentiments about the past, the present and the future emerged, and the area in which frictions and tensions revealed themselves.

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Note on the text

All translations are my own, except those taken from published English editions. All interviews were conducted with the full consent of the interviewees. In order to guarantee protection of their privacy my interviewees names were changed or not included.

CONTENTS

GLOSSARY	15
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	16
ERRATA	17
LIST OF FIGURES	18

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction	22
----------------------------------	----

1. Doing anthropology at home	28
2 Structure of the thesis	36

CHAPTER TWO: Memory, Place, Identity	40
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1. Central Aims and Research Questions	40
2. Introducing an ethnography of Greek Alexandrians	42
2.1 Identity making	43
2.2 History, Historicity and Memory	48
2.3 Memory and Space	52
2.4 Generations and Cultural transmission	55
3. Research Methodology	59

CHAPTER THREE: Historical Background of the Greek community in Alexandria	66
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1. Greeks in Egypt: From the early 19 th century to the mid 20 th century	68
1. 1. Living in a 'multi-cultural' environment	70
2. The establishment of the Greek community of Alexandria (1 st period)	75
2.1 The Greek <i>koinotita</i> of Alexandria	78
2.2. The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria	80
2.3. Relations with the Greek State: The Consulate General of Greece	83

3. The turbulent period of the departure during the 1950s -1960s (2nd period)	85
4. The decline of the community (3rd period)	86
5. The community during the 'Arab Spring' (2011)	91
6. The composition of the Greek Alexandrian community today	93
6.1 Permanent residents of Alexandria of Greek origin	94
6.2 The <i>Elladites</i> or <i>Neo-Alexandrians</i>	95
6.3 People in 'mixed marriages and Egyptians with Greek citizenship	96
7. The generational issue	97
7.1 The declining or elder generation (over 70 years of age)	98
7.2 Controlling generation (45-70 years of age)	100
7.3 Emerging generation (20-45 years of age)	101
7.4 High School generation	102
CHAPTER FOUR: Creating a community exhibition: practice and politics	105
1. Collaboration, negotiation and exhibition authority	106
1.1 Politics and power: Finances, spaces and 'ownership'	112
1.2 The community's boundaries: Exhibiting the self	118
2. Designing the exhibition: Visual representation and narratives on the past	119
2.1 Designing the exhibition: Kinds of exhibits, themes, aesthetics, symbolism in time and space	123
2.2 The exhibition layout and presentation	125
3. Visiting the exhibition on the opening day: A social experience with multiple meanings	128
4. Reactions from guests and visitors	132
CHAPTER FIVE: 'The guardians of Thermopylae': Making identity through history	139
1. Narratives of a glorious past	141
1.1 The official narrative of the community	141

1.2 The community's ethnic and local myths	142
1.2.1. Myth of origin- Alexander the Great	142
1.2.2 Myths of the modern era- C. P. Cavafy rediscovered	146
1.2.3 The 'Great Benefactors'	148
2. From memory to history: Ideological constructs	150
3. 'Our past is chasing us wherever we go'	153
4. Memory and Narrative in the context of the exhibition	156
4.1 Narrative silences	160
 CHAPTER SIX: The socio-spatial relations of the Greek community in Alexandria	 163
1. Alexandria: The city's formation in a historical perspective	164
1.1 The development of the modern multi-ethnic Alexandria (19 th and 20 th c.)	166
1.2 The new transformed city (from the 1960s to the present day)	175
2. Experiencing the contemporary city: The use of public spaces	177
2.1 The city loss here and there: Memories, nostalgia and empirical living	181
3. The Greek microcosm: Physical and ideological space	183
3.1 Boundaries and margins: the creation of a voluntary exclusion	186
3.2 Filming a walk into the city	190
 CHAPTER SEVEN: The Greek Schools: Institutional spaces of the Greek Alexandrian identity	 194
1. Visual representations of the school buildings and activities	195
2. Enculturation and Education	197
2.1 The School: Formal education and reproduction of identity	199
3. The Greek educational system in Egypt	201
3.1 The Greek School's in Alexandria	206
3.2 School activities and events	210
4. Glories of the past and anxieties about the future	216
4.1 The main issues around the Greek School today	217

4.2 Debates over the School's future	221
CHAPTER EIGHT: Conclusions	225
A community under pressure	225
BIBLIOGRAPH	237
Primary Sources	277
E- Sources	278
ENDNOTES	281
APPENDICES	
Appendix I	
a. A DVD containing an interactive presentation of the exhibition "Alexandrian Greeks: voyaging through time..."	
b. A printed version of the visual material of the exhibition presented in the DVD	
Appendix II 'Mental Maps' of the city	

GLOSSARY

community, or *paroikia*: The group of Greeks living in Alexandria

Egyptiotes, or **Greeks of Egypt**: All Greeks who were born and lived in Egypt singular *Egyptiotis*, feminine *Egyptiotissa*.

Elladites or **Greeks from the mainland**: The Greeks who live in Greece

Elliniko Tetragono (literal meaning, the Greek square shaped block): This is a non-residential area of 39,742 square metres, located in the centre of the city. The land was given to the Greek *koinotita* of Alexandria by the Egyptian government between 1903-1905 under the condition that only charity institutions, such as schools, orphanages, etc., would be built.

Enosi (Union): Is how the Greeks refer to the AEEA (*Athlitiki Enosi Ellinon Alexandrias*) (Athletic Association of Greeks of Alexandria), which is located in the *Elliniko Tetragono*. Today it has become the main space for social transactions and meetings among Greeks. I prefer to call it the 'Union' as this word describes better the Greek word *Enosi*, which means united.

GKA: Greek Koinotita of Alexandria. In the text it may also be referred to as the *koinotita*

Greek Alexandrians, or **Alexandrian residents**: The Greeks who are residents of Alexandria

koinotita: The official institution of a Greek community

Leading members of the koinotita: The *koinotita* board (9 members)

Leading members of the community: A term used for all Greek leading figures such as the president of the *koinotita*, the General Consul of Greece, the Patriarch, etc

Nostalgic Egyptiotes or **nostalgic Alexandrians**: The Greeks of Egypt or Alexandria who left Egypt after the 60s. In the thesis I use the term to refer mainly to those who settled in Greece.

Neo-Alexandrians: The Greeks from the mainland who reside in Alexandria for a short period of time (teachers, priests etc).

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

GKA (EKA)	Greek Koinotita of Alexandria
GAs	Greek Alexandrians
SAE (ΣAE)	<i>Simvoulío Apodoimou Ellinismou</i> (World Council of Hellenes Abroad)
ELIA (ΕΛΙΑ)	<i>Elliniko, Logotechniko kai Istoriko Archeio</i> (The Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive)
SASSA (ΣΑΣΣΑ)	<i>Sindesmos Apofiton Averofeiou Scholis Alexandrias</i> (Union of Graduates of Averofeio School of Alexandria)
ACHS	Alexandria Centre for Hellenistic Studies
SEE (ΣΑΕ)	<i>Sindesmos Egyptioton Ellinon</i> (Association of Greek Egyptians)
ENOA (ΕΝΟΑ)	<i>Ellinikos Nautikos Omilos Alexandrias</i> (Greek Yacht Club of Alexandria)
AEEA (ΑΕΕΑ)	<i>Athlitiki Enosi Ellinon Alexandrias</i> (Athletic Union of the Greeks of Alexandria)
HFC	Hellenic Foundation for Culture (Elliniko Idrima Politismou)
CGG	Consulate General of Greece in Alexandria
GCCA	Greek Chamber of Commerce in Alexandria

ERRATA

Appendix I

1. pp. 80, 81, 82, 83 'Greek militaries' should read 'Greek soldiers'
2. p.81 Spelling 'with'

LIST OF FIGURES

All figures by the author, unless otherwise stated

Chapter one

Figure 1.1 The *Elliniko Tetragono*, 2010

Chapter two

Figure 2.1 First public event at the *Enosi*, 2011

Figure 2.2 Third public event at the *Enosi*, 2012

Chapter three

Figure 3.1 'Multi-cultural' gathering, unknown date (by Zechary)

Figure 3.2 A Greek photographer's shop, unknown date (by Topis)

Figure 3.3 Accounting office, unknown date (by Topis)

Figure 3.4 The *koinotita* board during the 1950's (by Topis)

Figure 3.5 The Patriarch and some of his Greek flock, 2011

Figure 3.6 The Patriarch blessing members of the community on Easter day, 2012 (by Koutoupas)

Figure 3.7 The president of the *koinotita*, the Consul and the Patriarch at the traditional New Year's pie cutting, January 2012

Figure 3.8 The Arab Spring uprising in January 2011 (Fantz's CNN web article)

Figure 3.9 Celebrating Easter day in the courtyard of the Greek School, 2011

Figure 3.10 Celebrating Easter day in the community stadium, 2012

Figure 3.11 In Kaniskereio. The previous Elders' House, 2011

Figure 3.12 In Kaniskereio. The previous Elders' House, 2011

Figure 3.13 The board committee, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece, the Consul and the Ambassador in 2012. Behind them are photos of former presidents and benefactors

Figure 3.14 Members of the emerging generation at a gathering in my house, 2012

Figure 3.15 High school students organized a ball for the community to raise money, 2011

Chapter four

Figure 4.1 Aerial view of the *Enosi*, 2012

Figure 4.2 Dinner of members of the community (unknown date)

Figure 4.3 Members of the community dance at an association ball (unknown date)

Figure 4.4 A graphic representation of the *Elliniko Tetragono*

Figure 4.5 The Consulate General. The exhibition was held on the upper floor of the building, on the right side, 2012

Figure 4.6 The invitation, English version

Figure 4.7 The poster, English version

Figure 4.8 The exhibition hall, the panels and the pictures

Figure 4.9 Large panel in room two

Figure 4.10 Large panel in room three

Figure 4.11 View of the exhibition

Figure 4.12 Me giving a speech at the exhibition opening (by Koutoupas)

Figure 4.13 Some visitors viewing the exhibition

Chapter five

Figure 5.1 Official procession in the streets of Alexandria to celebrate the erection of the statue of Alexander the Great, 1999 (SAASA collection)

Figure 5.2 The statue of Alexander the Great, 1999 (SAASA collection)

Figure 5.3 The Cavafy museum in Alexandria, 2012

Figure 5.4 Portrait bust of a Greek benefactor in the Koinotita offices, 2012

Figure 5.5 The Kaniskereio building, 2012

Figure 5.6. Carnival party at the Davarakis house, 1948 (by Ritas)

Figure 5.7 Alexandrian friends in Lake Mareotis (unknown date)

Chapter six

Figure 6.1 An old street sign in Alexandria with the name 'Rue l' Eglise Grec'

Figure 6.2 and 6.3 A Greek archaeologist who runs the excavations in Alexandria.

Despite scholarly objections, she is convinced that the statue she found represents Alexander the Great.

Figure 6.4 Map of Alexandria, 1856 (in Ilbert and Yannakakis 1997:196)

Figure 6.5 General view of the *Corniche* (unknown date)

Figure 6.6 View of an Alexandrian street (early 20th century)

Figure 6.7 The old Greek hospital (ELIA)

Figure 6.8 The former home to Antoniadeio Elders' House (ELIA)

Figure 6.9 Alexandria and its suburbs. (in Ilbert and Yannakakis 1997:198)

Figure 6.10 The Good Friday *Epitaphios* procession in the streets of Alexandria, 1959 (Trechantzakis collection)

Figure 6.11 High school boys at Mohamed Ali square, 1899 (ELIA)

Figure 6.12 Funeral procession of a prominent person in Alexandria (Saatsoglou collection)

Figure 6.13 An old building owned by a Greek, 2012

Figure 6.14 Map of the new, transformed city

Figures 6.15 and 6.16 Current views of Alexandria

Figure 6.17 Egyptian women looking at the Greco-Roman amphitheatre, 2012

Figure 6.18 Map of the Greek spaces in the city

Figure 6.19 Church on a Sunday morning, 2012

Figure 6.20 Another view of the *Elliniko Tetragono*. The *Enosi* is below on the left.

Figure 6.21 The *Epitaphios* procession in the Evangelismos church, 2012

Figure 6.22 Egyptian women looking at the procession from their windows

Figure 6.23 Bazaar organized by the high school students at the *Enosi*, with the Consul and the Patriarch shopping, 2012

Figure 6.24 A ball organized by the school at the *Enosi* with the participation of all community members, 2012

Chapter seven

Figure 7.1 The Famileiadios primary school in Attarin area

Figure 7.2 National Day celebration in the community stadium, 1949 (by Rittas)

Figure 7.3 Arabic language class, 2012 (by Billiris)

Figure 7.4 The entrance to Averofeio High School, 2011

Figure 7.5 National Day celebration in Salvageios school, 1952. Today's primary school
(Katsibris collection)

Figure 7.6 School event with traditional dances at the school's amphitheatre, 1960s
(Thlivitou collection)

Figure 7.7 Gymnastics at the Municipal stadium, early 20th century (Averofeio
collection)

Figure 7.8 Schoolgirls watching the games at the Municipal stadium, 1950s

Figure 7.9 School games at the community stadium, 1970's (Vafeiadis collection)

Figure 7.10 Student's parade in school games, 2000 (by Eleutheriou)

Figure 7. 11 High school students of the last three grades writting postcards for the
exhibition

Figure 7.12 View of the Averofeio High School, 2012 (by Billiris)

Figure 7.13 All school students, as boy scouts and girl guides, participating in an event
at the schools' amphitheatre, 2012

Chapter eight

Figure 8.1 Meeting of the Greek Women's Association at St. Savvas church, 2012

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

In 2011, the 'January 25 Revolution' took place in Egypt¹ in the context of the 'Arab Spring'. A few months later, in April 2011, I went to Alexandria, Egypt to do anthropological field research, focusing on the Greek community there. The main aim of my research was to provide descriptive, narrative and visual ethnographic data with a view to exploring key issues of identity, memory, space and cultural transmission. Although I went to London in December 2012 to start the analysis of the data and write my thesis, which I then completed in Greece, I have returned to Alexandria on numerous occasions on follow-up field trips. Because one of my aims has been to capture the complex relations across time and space that have shaped the lives of Greek Alexandrians, I have endeavoured to capture their perceptions of, and responses to ongoing – often dramatic – changes in their social, economic and political circumstances.

The Greek community of Alexandria is a diaspora community, which was established as an official entity (known as the '*koinotita*')² in 1843 to represent the Greek residents of that city. Although the Greek Alexandrian community shares characteristics with Anderson's (1983) 'imagined' community, it is important to stress that this is a community that has material embodiments through its institutions and spaces and many opportunities for face-to-face interaction among its members. In other words it has a facticity of presence beyond the symbolic or the imagined. Confronted with enormous social, economic and political transformations, Greek Alexandrians have established their own sense of historical continuity and spatial connection to the city of Alexandria and its wider population.

The Greek community played a major historical role in the economic, political and cultural life of Alexandria and Egypt. This is corroborated by the fact that the most

significant buildings associated with the community are located in the city centre³. In the early 20th century, out of all the non-Egyptian groups that lived in the city of Alexandria (British, French, Italians, Jews, Armenians, and others), Greeks constituted the largest community (37,106 people in 1927-1928)⁴ and had the most distinctive and significant institutional presence; its members enjoyed a social, cultural and economic status and a standard of living well above that of the native population.

Despite its claims to a distinctive and clearly formulated identity, claims that are superficially confirmed by the community's strong institutional presence, my research data showed that the Greek Alexandrian community was, and still is, characterized by socio-economic diversity. From its establishment, the majority of its members belonged to the lower-middle and the working class (Karanasou 1999: 36-38). Nevertheless, owing to the development of a strong network of solidarity, all Greek Alexandrians (GA) enjoyed privileged living conditions. Regardless of their economic status in the local social hierarchy, everyone, from the entrepreneur to the factory worker, benefited from a superior quality of life, both socially and spatially. Education, entertainment, the arts, health services, community activities, social services (the care of orphans, the elderly, the poor), communal buildings (schools, places of work, playgrounds, clubs) were accessible to all Greek Alexandrians.

However, the stability and continuity of this lifestyle were disrupted by the political and economic reforms that followed the Egyptian revolution of 1952. Nasser's nationalization policy in particular had a dramatic effect across the community⁵. Indeed, from the late 1950s onwards, the Greek Alexandrian community started to decline⁶, as most Greeks left Egypt for Greece and other destinations. Moreover, the city changed dramatically in terms of its social dynamics, cultural diversity and urban and architectural character.

Today, the Greek Alexandrian community has approximately 300 to 400 members⁷, who belong to different age groups, socioeconomic strata and, due to marriages with non-Greek Alexandrians, diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds. There are also

differences in the socio-economic status of the members of the community, most of whom have some official position in the community's institutions. Because of this, and given the importance of the visible and recognized institutions representing the Greek Alexandrian community, in my thesis I focus on this institutional profile, i.e. the community's official presence in the city. Where 'ordinary' Alexandrians are seen and heard, this tends to be in relation to their views about what the leaders of the community do and say and the extent to which they agree with, or differ from the 'official line' articulated by the officials representing the community.

Greek Alexandrians define their identity in a complex way that draws on shared cultural, economic, geographical, social and historical elements that highlight the interconnections between modernization, technological evolution and migratory patterns. According to my informants, the Greeks migrated from different homelands within Greece (including the islands, the mainland and Asia Minor) to Alexandria, not in pursuit of economic and social improvement, but because they were 'invited' by the Egyptian government to contribute their knowledge and professional skills to the modernization of Egypt. They developed the cotton and tobacco trades, they worked as technological experts in the construction of the Suez Canal, and played a broader role in the history of Egypt and Alexandria, as will be discussed later.

Today, the Greeks of Alexandria emphasize their special historical, geographical and cultural connections to Egypt. They often argue that the Mediterranean Sea has always been a highway rather than a barrier, connecting instead of separating Greece, their place and culture of origin, to Egypt, their place and culture of settlement. Greek Alexandrians put forward an alternative claim to an identity linked with place, one that is based on a spatially and temporally significant relationship with a locality. They argue that this not only distinguishes them from other ethnic communities in the city, but gives them a higher status than that enjoyed by them, whether they be European colonial (British, French, Italian) communities or other national and religious groups, such as Syrians, and Armenians, Muslims, Jews, Copts and others.

According to Politis, a Greek historian born in Egypt, the Greeks of Egypt not only feel proud of their contemporary contribution to the development of modern Egypt, in economic, technological and cultural terms, but they also regard themselves as pioneers of civilization (1930, vol 2: 5-6). They base this perception on geographical and historical criteria: their 'ancient' Greek roots in Egypt, the long-term relationships between Greece and Egypt (economic transactions and trade; cultural exchanges regarding art, architectural design and so on)⁸ going back to Antiquity and, indeed, to the foundation of the city of Alexandria by the Greek Macedonian Alexander the Great in 331 BC.

In spite of the dramatic changes in social, economic and political conditions that led to the decline of the contemporary Greek Alexandrian community, today this small isolated group of people still claims an elite status. According to my research, Greek Alexandrians base their perceptions of possessing a superior status, *vis-à-vis* multiple others. More specifically it is the older generation that expresses this feeling of superiority, in principle and in practice, towards other groups in Alexandria including the Egyptians, and even Greeks from the nation-state. The fact that other Europeans, Middle East populations and even mainland Greeks are included in this hierarchy is very significant because it suggests that history and culture (thought of as historical products) are more important than other aspects of ethnicity, such as common origins, notions of shared descent, or straightforward colonial ideology. Indeed their narratives, visual representations and social practices reflect their shared memories of a uniquely Greek Alexandrian 'glorious past' (as Greek Alexandrians frequently described the combined mythic and historical, ancient and recent character of the community) and a rich combination of economic, social and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984:125). As Karakasidou and Tsibiridou argue, myths are as 'old as humankind' and 'synonymous with any kind of "master narrative"' (2006: 217). In the case of Greek Alexandrians, their myths of origin are formulated in relation to a master narrative of belonging that is, at the same time, a story of unsettled, vulnerable and troubled identities. Additionally, cultural capital (achieved through important investments in formal education, learning foreign

languages, and cultivating particular lifestyles and tastes)⁹ in combination with the economic and social achievements of community members, contributes greatly to promoting upward social mobility and supports their claims to a distinctive identity (Bourdieu 1984).



Figure 1.1 View of the *Elliniko Tetragono*, 2010

During fieldwork in Alexandria, I realized that one characteristic feature of the Greek Alexandrian community that plays a role in its social dynamics is the existence of discrepancies among its members as well as its institutions; this becomes particularly evident in the different views that are expressed across different generations. The older generations who have remained in Alexandria have memories of the trauma they experienced in the 1950s. These include painful disruptions such as the nationalization of property, forced displacement of foreigners (British, French and Jews), the need for urgent decisions by Greeks about whether to stay or leave, and, for those who did stay, the subsequent dramatic changes to their way of life. Additionally, in more recent years, all Greek Alexandrian residents have lived through the violent

events and political instability during the Arab Spring revolution of 2011 (see pp 90-92). This is why they often express feelings of anxiety, exacerbated by the community's population decline, and the fear of a possible future displacement.

To this day Greek Alexandrians tend to project a sense of 'ethnic purity'¹⁰. They refuse to be assimilated into Egyptian society and do not mingle in the urban environment of modern Alexandria. Their refusal takes the form of a kind of spatial and social isolation, and consequently they live within what can be described as an 'urban enclave' (Abrahamson 1996), a city within a city. This spatial and conceptual boundary has recently been reinforced by the replacement of a metallic fence with a high stone wall that now surrounds the *Elliniko Tetragono*¹¹ (literal meaning 'the Greek square shaped block'), the main area in the city where the most important Greek community buildings are concentrated¹². The very real effects of these different boundaries have meant that there is very little discussion in this thesis about Greek Alexandrian existence outside the community's events and structures (fig 1.1). The transactions that occur through diverse activities have the effect, however, of 'reconnecting what has been separated' as pointed out by Barth, who gives the example of 'neighbors conversing over the garden fence. The territorial boundary of their properties separates them but it gives shape to their interaction [because] it frames and defines the nature of the opportunity' (2000:29). My research showed that, despite adverse reactions from most older community members towards any possible opening up to Egyptian society, and their attempts to preserve the 'purity' of their identity through socio-spatial isolation, many changes have occurred, as younger members of the Greek Alexandrian community have already begun to be more receptive to Egyptian society and its spaces. The permeability of the boundaries has enduring consequences, exemplified by the fact that the majority of students currently attending the exclusively Greek School in Alexandria are of mixed ethnicity and religious affiliations.

1. Doing anthropology at home

I was born and raised in this Greek Alexandrian community as a third-generation Greek in Egypt. My parents, second-generation members of the Greek community in Egypt, had lived in Alexandria since the 1940s. My father was brought up in Suez, and established his own business in Alexandria, which he managed up until the 1990s, as one of the few remaining Greeks who was not affected by Nasser's nationalization policy. Since the early 1990s, when my family left Alexandria and moved to Greece, we made our permanent home in Athens, but like many Greeks from Egypt (known as *Egyptiotes*), we have kept our house in Alexandria, which I visit often. Like most of my peers, as a teenager and high school student in Alexandria, I had always looked forward to the day of my departure, because to me that represented embarking for a new world of possibilities. This was a sentiment widely shared by the younger members of the Greek Alexandrian community. To a large extent, my expectations were realized as, after settling in Greece, I studied Archaeology at the National University of Athens and Anthropology at the University of the Aegean on Lesbos.

While in Greece, I started having regular social contacts with both Greeks from the national state and *Egyptiotes*, and I gradually came to understand that I had acquired a new identity as an *Egyptiotissa*: a relocated person from Egypt living in Greece, an ex-member of the Greek Alexandrian community. It was then that I started wondering about the meanings and the stereotypes assigned to the identity and the social role of *Egyptiotes* in Greece and to consider to what extent these stereotypes were meaningful for the different generations of *Egyptiotes*, at different times, both in Greece and in Egypt. It was then too that the interrelated qualities of cultural and social phenomena emerged as central considerations in thinking about identity in terms of a range of factors, including ethnicity, religion, age, socioeconomic status; time (generational differences, memory, history); and space (locality, geography and built environments).

Despite the fact that I adapted relatively quickly to my new environment in Athens, there was one thing that I found difficult to cope with and that always made me feel

uncomfortable. This was the predictable way in which Greeks from the national state (whom the *Egyptiotes* call *Elladites*) reacted to my origins, largely based on stereotypical notions about what an *Egyptiotis* identity entailed. To such questions and comments as: ‘Oh, so you really come from Egypt? Alexandria? I have heard a lot about that city’, there was always an additional element of exaggerated admiration, which I could not understand and therefore could not accept. With time I realized that the *Elladites* I was speaking to were projecting the stereotype of the *Egyptiotis* and therefore expected me to speak at least four languages, to be cosmopolitan, well-educated, of high economic status, and even to know all of Cavafy’s poems by heart, since the poet’s Alexandrian place of origin added an extra layer of prestige to the image of all Alexandrian Greeks. Thus, what was expected of me was something totally foreign to who I really was.

The stereotype of the wealthy, well-mannered and educated *Egyptiotis* was largely constructed in the 1960s, when the political reforms carried out in Egypt led thousands of Greeks, among other foreign groups, to abandon Egypt. It was then that many members of the Greek community of Alexandria moved to Greece¹³, where they have been known ever since as *Egyptiotes Alexandrinoi*. The term *Egyptiotis*, however, is simply indicative of their country of birth and residency and does not imply Egyptian ethnicity. On the other hand, *Egyptiotes* were frequently attributed (by themselves and others) with having specific characteristics that differentiated them in many ways from Greeks born elsewhere, on the Greek mainland and diaspora, as well as being distinct from other populations of Egypt. There is a concept of locality in this word, which might go back to their claims for the ancient roots of the Greeks in the country (as will be discussed later).

In most history books on the Greeks of Egypt, which tend to be by Greek authors born in Egypt, it is proudly noted that they are the only diaspora Greeks who use a special term to refer to themselves. As mentioned above, they are called ‘*Egyptiotes*’ or ‘*Egyptiotes Ellines*’ in contrast to the terms ‘Greek-Americans’, ‘Greek-Australians’, or the periphrastical ‘Greeks of Syria’, ‘Greeks of Sudan’ used for the Greeks of the respective countries. Ntalachanis (2015:25) states that this term reveals the in-

between state of existence among two geographically close countries and their hybrid identity, which is characteristic of every diasporic group. Gorman (2003: 174-75) suggests, that the term '*Egyptiotis Ellinas*' is derived from the translation of the word 'mutamassirun'¹⁴ into the Greek language, which literally means the 'Egyptianized'. We don't have precise evidence as to when the term was first introduced and by whom, but it seems that it was already in use by the Greeks of Egypt by the end of the 19th century.

I would argue that even if the initial definition in Greek is a direct translation of the term 'mutamassirun' (Egyptianized)¹⁵, as Gorman suggests, the use of the term '*Egyptiotis Ellinas*' during the 20th century, mainly after the exodus of Greeks from Egypt, acquired a new meaning. When the Greeks of Egypt settled in Greece and had to introduce themselves to their fellow Greeks, they called themselves '*Egyptiotes*', a term which didn't exist in the Greek vocabulary (prior to the 1960s, no encyclopaedia contains this word. The terms in use were 'the Greeks of Egypt', or 'Hellenism of Egypt')¹⁶. Today, the terms most widely used by the *Elladites*, are 'Greeks of Egypt' and '*Egyptiotes Ellines*', although there are still cases where (less well educated) Greeks address them as Egyptians. *Egyptiotes* consider the uniqueness of this word a matter of great significance.

In previous research that I conducted in Athens, *Egyptiotes* living in the city admitted that, despite some initial difficulties, their adjustment to Greece had been relatively smooth and, as they often commented, 'doors were open to them'. However, most of them also claimed¹⁷ that *Elladites* initially viewed them with resentment, because they were more easily employed owing to the higher levels of education they enjoyed, their multicultural experience, and their multilingualism, qualifications that were rare among the *Elladites* at the time. However, they seemed to feel that with time this resentment turned into admiration. Yet it should also be stressed that, even though these stereotypical attributes were ascribed to all Egyptian Greeks, there is a tendency among *Elladites* to identify all *Egyptiotes* as Alexandrians. This is a consequence of the popularity of the Greek Egyptian poet C. P. Cavafy, the extensive Greek and European literature about Alexandria, and the fact that half of the

population of Egyptian Greeks lived in Alexandria¹⁸. Furthermore, Alexandria was the most European and the most important cultural centre in Egypt during the 19th and 20th centuries. To this day, there is a great deal of competition among the members of the 'Association of Greek *Egyptiotes*' (*Sindesmos Egyptioton*¹⁹) in Athens, which leads many non-Alexandrians to complain that 'Egypt is not only Alexandria'.

Today these stereotypes apply mainly to the older generation of Egyptian Greeks, primarily those who left Egypt during the 1950s and 1960s, and formed the first group of *Egyptiotes* who settled in Greece. They unofficially created and preserved their new identity, in which they implanted the real and imagined elements that characterized the social life and cultural identity linked to the life of Greek communities in Egypt. There was a very significant contrast between the idealized living conditions of the *Egyptiotes* in Egypt until the 1950s, and the hardships in Greece, a poor country that had suffered an influx of refugees from Asia Minor in the 1920s, followed by the Nazi Occupation and the Civil War,²⁰ which contributed to the *Egyptiotes*' attitude of superiority towards the *Elladites*. Similar attitudes were observed by Hirschon in her research on Asia Minor refugees, where she pointed out that after the refugees settled in Greece, they also thought of Greeks as culturally inferior and described them as 'peasants' and as people 'who don't know how to behave'²¹ (2006: 5-6). Greek *Egyptiotes*, especially the Alexandrians who considered themselves the most cultivated of the *Egyptiotes*, also referred to the *Elladites* as 'peasants'²², 'uncultivated', 'rude' and 'impolite'²³.

The fact that at the time of the *Egyptiotes*' arrival in Greece the country was still recovering from that socially and economically devastating civil war explains in part why they felt that had come from paradise to a living hell. This kind of nostalgia is what Herzfeld calls 'the collective representation of an Edenic order' (1997:109). This notion of a 'paradise lost' is associated not only with the older generation of *Egyptiotes* who moved to Greece, but also with those who stayed behind.

However, the younger generations who were born in Egypt after the 1960s, at a time when the community was already in decline, do not share the older generation's

memories of what they describe as the ‘glorious’ days of life before Nasser’s revolution. Younger people do not identify in the same way, because the cultural elements that characterize their conditions of life in Egypt have changed dramatically since the 1960s when the first *Egyptiotes* moved to Greece. As mentioned, young Greek Alexandrians today live in socially and spatially isolated conditions within the Greek community and have limited access to intellectual or recreational activities in an Egyptian, mainly Muslim, urban environment in which there are no longer other significant foreign communities. They are experiencing a process of political instability and economic transformation alongside a feeling of escalating anxiety about the community’s uncertain future.

The social dynamics described began to be apparent to me after I had been absent from Alexandria for several years; when I started to detach myself from the Greek Alexandrian community and look at it from a cultural and geographical distance. By then, I realized that from the 1960s to the present, a cultural gap had gradually emerged between the ways in which the older generations of Greek Alexandrians living in Greece or Alexandria, and the younger generations of Greeks currently living in Alexandria, perceive themselves and their community. The latter especially tend to react against the dominant stereotypes and the earlier lifestyles of fellow Greek Alexandrians. In fact, there is a dynamic coexistence between the older stereotypes that idealize a ‘glorious’ past drawn from 19th and 20th century history and the ‘Eurocentric Alexandrian cosmopolitanism’ of the past, and the contemporary notions of identity that focus on cultural resistance to Egyptianization, and the preservation (physically and symbolically) of Greek identity in Alexandria.

My first research into the Alexandrians began in 2004, when the Bibliotheca Alexandrina commissioned a series of interviews in Athens with Greeks from Alexandria who had settled there permanently after the 1960s. While updating my understanding of the Greek Alexandrian diaspora during my recent research in Alexandria in 2011, it became clear that there was a gap in the ethnographic literature on the Greek communities of Egypt (including Alexandria). A recent ethnographic study by Buttler (2007) on the Alexandrian Library project explored

the complexities of the rise of heritage, of urban regeneration and memory-work in the Alexandrian postcolonial context. Buttler argues that by promoting the 'new face' of Alexandria, the Mubarak government attempted to re-open the country to Europe, and in that sense the establishment of the new Bibliotheca Alexandrina can be interpreted as a new strategic move towards the West.

Although Buttler's work does not refer to the Greek community, it proved to be useful to my research as it exposed the Greek origins underpinning the drive to institutionalize the memory of the Alexandrian past, in this instance articulated by the Egyptian government in relation to the Egyptian nation-state. The new Library project drew explicit links to the Hellenic past and raised – once again – the spectre of Alexander the Great. Here the narratives of the Egyptian state and of the Greek Alexandrian community converge, for it is upon these notions of the past that Greek Alexandrians also base their claims to the city. In the meantime, and despite the fact that the 'anthropology of Greece has undergone significant changes since its inception in the mid-twentieth century', Greek and non-Greek anthropologists have produced a considerable body of ethnographic data about Greek society and culture on both the mainland of Greece, and in communities of the Greek diaspora (Karakasidou and Tsibiridou 2006: 218-223). Nevertheless, none of these works have taken as their focus the lives of the Greek community in Alexandria. It is this gap in the anthropological literature that I aim to fill, by focusing on the idiosyncratic temporalities and sociospatial relationships of this particular community and, at the same time, while reflecting on my role as a native anthropologist, by applying a visual methodology to my research.

When I started my anthropological research, I came to realize firstly, the significance of my own role as an 'insider' to the community, and secondly, the need to create some distance, such as that which an 'outsider' always has from a society that is not his/her own. Although I was aware of the biases in social science and the fact that there is no such thing as objectivity or neutrality (Agassi 1974; Thapan 1998), during my field research and in the course of writing my thesis, I tried to cross a line between my 'insider' and 'outsider' role, and find an appropriate authorial voice to

present a situation and set of experiences that might be meaningful both at a personal level and in relation to debates within the social sciences. I also realized, once again, how challenging it was to carry out anthropological research at home, despite having left my homeland and lived abroad for many years²⁴.

Peirano's review of the emergence and evolution of 'anthropology at home', points out what other scholars have also discussed: that there are both advantages and disadvantages in studying one's own culture²⁵ (1998). My position as an insider proved to be advantageous with regard to gaining access to key people and institutions in the community. Thanks to my connection with Alexandria, I had good personal contacts and a good knowledge of the city's topography and of the Arabic spoken in Egypt. One issue I faced when I arrived in Alexandria was how to introduce myself to the community. As Mascarenhas-Keyes (1987) has put it, as an insider 'I had to transcend an a priori ascribed social position in the community, in order to professionally relate to the whole spectrum of native categories'. Until I began my fieldwork, my role with members of the community was that of a friend who shared daily life and memories of a common time in Alexandria. The crucial question therefore was how to 're-present' myself to people I'd known all my life and how to 'become' an anthropologist carrying out research about the members of my own community. One of my first concerns was to explain the parameters of my research, discuss with 'my subjects' what their participation would entail, and reassure them that the research would be carried out in an ethical manner and that their privacy would be respected. But although I kept explaining the purpose of my stay, people often failed to see me as a researcher. I remained more of a friend, someone who was trusted, and with whom they found it easier to discuss their worries; overall, these considerations meant that the majority of Greek Alexandrians I contacted during my research were very willing to participate in the project.

On the other hand, there were several disadvantages to my close relationship with the community. Given my emotional involvement, there was always the danger of ethno- and ego-centrism. Jones (1970:256) is right when he states that, 'the insider may depend too much on his own background, and his own sentiments and therefore

he might distort the 'truth' as much as the outsider' (see also Aguilar 1981; Narayan 1993) ²⁶. Indeed, one of the major problems I faced was that I found it very difficult to maintain a detached, outsider relationship with the people involved in my research even though I had already created a distance by living in Greece. In addition, I frequently found myself in the position of assuming common ground and researching a taken-for-granted reality; therefore, the 'exoticism' of my own society was less apparent to me. The only solution was to try to 'de-familiarize' myself with the place and people, to engage in a deeper reflection on my role as an anthropologist and maintain what Marcus and Cushman call 'critical awareness' (1982:65-66).

Upon the completion of my field research, I became very aware of the 'danger' of acting as a native by adopting a stereotypically idealistic and nostalgic approach in sentimental narratives and interpretations, even though I had always disliked them. Ntalachanis, in his recent history of the Greeks of Egypt, opens his introduction with the phrase 'I am not an *Egyptiotis*' (2015:19). Many *Egyptiotes* (including myself), who want to keep a distance from the events, were particularly pleased that a Greek who was not an *Egyptiotis* conducted research on the Greeks of Egypt. This is because, until today, most historical books in Greek, have been written by *Egyptiotes* (and mainly by Greeks from Alexandria), who, apart from using few sources, base their research mostly on memory, nostalgia, and the experience of living in Egypt and eventually settling in Greece, which gives their writing a tone which is emotionally laden and often pompous.

Anthropological inquiry is compatible with the somewhat 'liminal position' I found myself in, by being in between and experiencing re-placement on my return as an anthropologist rather than a full resident of Alexandria. This liminality also characterizes all the members of the community: they are Greeks living on African soil, they practise Orthodox Christianity in a predominantly Muslim environment, and moreover, although they feel fully Greek in Egypt they are called *Egyptiotes* in Greece. During fieldwork and when writing my thesis, as I gradually developed a way to deal with my double role, I came to understand that it is precisely my position of being in-

between (Douglas 1966) that made my thesis research so interesting and challenging for me.

My double role as an ethnographer in the community in which I was born and raised, may also be framed in terms of my identity as a kind of 'halfie', a term used by Abu-Lughod (1991) to describe individuals who are caught between two or more cultural boundaries. She argues that the 'halfies' inhabit cultural identities that have multiple origins or offer different perspectives. A typical case is where 'national or cultural identity is mixed by virtue of migration' (1991:466), as in the case of Greek Alexandrians and myself. Abu-Lughod attempts to explain the problems that arise when one is both self and other, and argues that because of those split selves, 'halfies' are troubled by dilemmas related to issues about 'speaking "for" and speaking "from"'. This troublesome question allows them to critically assess 'positionality, audience, and the power inherent in distinctions in self and other' (1991:468-470). Her proposal aims to support the production of ethnographic accounts in which culture is not presented as something static, discrete, homogenous and coherent. Rather, it aims to recognize possible connections between different societies, acknowledge sociocultural change, and identify the different positions through which people experience culture, and the contradictions involved in the course of everyday life.

2. Structure of the thesis

Throughout my thesis what is mainly explored are the tensions and the synergies between the community representatives and the ordinary members they are meant to speak for. This is why all the chapters of my thesis present the different efforts of community members and leaders to establish a place of meaning through the built environment, through narratives, social events and commemorations. The chapters also present the different ways in which these factors are understood and received by all members of the community, paying particular attention to the tensions that arise across generational lines. Moreover, as the making of the photographic exhibition on the history of the community became the core of my research and the vehicle for

demonstrating the different ways in which the community makes sense of its past, present and future, the structure of my thesis was organized in relation to that event.

Chapter two provides the theoretical framework of the study, including a discussion of key concepts such as identity, memory, space and cultural transmission, as well as the central aims and research questions of the thesis. It also outlines the methodological framework and discusses the rationale for placing the exhibition at the centre of the research and as the expression of the main visual method used to explore the central issues of my research.

Based on existing literature and historical sources, chapter three briefly provides the historical background of the Greek presence in Alexandria from the 19th century onwards. It focuses on the Greek community in Alexandria and seeks to explore how institutions came to play an important role in community life by giving an overview of its structure, characteristics, key official authorities and the socio-economic status of its members. It also examines the reasons for the de-population of the Greek community, which led to its 'decline' and considers how the political, social and economic transformation of Egyptian society – in the decades after the Egyptian revolution of 1952 – influenced the community and was responsible for its current composition and practices.

Chapter four provides an overview of the exhibition I curated in Alexandria in collaboration with many of the members of the Greek Alexandrian community, and describes how it was planned, prepared, designed and performed to reflect the contributions and interests of different social sectors of the community. The concepts of exhibition communication and politics of representation are introduced in this chapter, along with issues concerning the ways in which the participants wanted to represent themselves (or the community), and the stories they wanted to tell about the past, the present or the future. The chapter also focuses on the reactions of guests and visitors, and examines how visitors experienced and understood the exhibition.

Chapter five explores the symbolic elements of the heritage of the community, and analyses the process of monumentalizing the past. It also shows how members of the

community make sense of their past, how this past is remembered and understood and how they use it to understand themselves in the present. Taking the phrase 'we are the last guardians of Thermopylae' (used by Greek Alexandrians to identify themselves) as a starting point I explore the importance of this metaphor for the community and the different meanings it conveys. Drawing on fieldwork data, I argue that it is the past they are seeking to preserve, which takes the form of a treasure that finds concrete expression in the photo archives, old books and the Greek buildings, especially the schools.

Chapter six considers research data related to the way the community experiences particular spaces in the city of Alexandria. This chapter examines the spatial and social boundaries of the community before and after Nasser's revolution and shows the discontinuities between past and present, between different narratives and imaginings of the city as they are articulated by different generations, who perceive the city in different ways. It also analyses the different mechanisms of social and spatial exclusion (as in the example of the 'golden cage') and issues of isolation, which the community developed after the 1960s in order to protect its 'unique' identity and its future.

Considering the dominance of visual representations of the school buildings and depictions of their activities in both personal and community photographic archives, chapter seven argues that the large number of photographs relating to education reflects the importance given to it by the Greek Alexandrian community in the past and the present. This chapter therefore focuses on the Greek schools as key symbols of the Greek Alexandrian community through time and space, where identity was/is constructed and reconstructed. Furthermore, consideration of the schools and their activities highlights the role of the Greek state as expressed within and through formal education programmes and strategies aimed at supporting education amongst its Alexandrian diaspora. This chapter also considers community attitudes regarding the recent changes in the school (mainly its opening to non-Greek students), and explores the effects of these changes on current attitudes and concerns about the

matter of continuity of Greek identity in Alexandria, as well as the challenges posed to its cultural reproduction.

In chapter eight, the themes of the thesis are drawn together in order to present a final discussion. Here I evaluate the process of mounting the exhibition and the use of visual material to explore identity, memory, space, representation and the tensions and possibilities that arise in attempts to reproduce particular cultural and social structures. It also explains why and how my thesis extends our current understanding of the ways in which visual material (especially photography) can explore various themes and why it is useful to do so. It pays particular attention to the different elements that only photographic collections can explore (why photographs were important for the Greek Alexandrians and how their selection of photographs told a collective story) and concludes with the findings of the exhibition project and methodology. Finally, it makes some remarks about how my position as an insider affected my approach and conclusions, how the study can be extended in the future, and what its limitations might be.

CHAPTER TWO

Memory, Place, Identity

1. Central aims and research questions

In my thesis I draw on notions of time and space as a framework for discussing the social dynamics of the Greek Alexandrian community in relation to the complex context of social, economic and political transformations it has experienced over the last 60 years or so. The aim is to explore culturally defined concepts of identity and memory among Greek Alexandrians, particularly in conjunction with the major events (social, political and economic) that followed the Egyptian revolution of 1952 and brought about vast socio-spatial changes within the Greek Alexandrian community. These changes altered the prevailing concepts of public and private space and affected inter-generational cultural transmission. As perceptions and practices explored in my thesis differ, depending not only on the status of the individual – as a simple member of the community or a leader – but, even more importantly, on age, the concept of generation will be utilized to examine the diverse ways in which the past, present and future are variously understood and confronted.

Moreover, the issues discussed in my thesis and which are at the heart of Greek-Alexandrian life, are explored not only through the community's narrative constructs (stories, texts, interviews), but also through visual data (photographs, videos, films, pictures), and material elements such as urban buildings and other spatial arrangements that are recognized as being central to the community life. As a means of bringing these diverse elements together, my research focused on producing, in collaboration with members of the community, an exhibition representing its history. The exhibition became the means through which interactions and tensions across the community's members and places unfolded, and where diverse narratives and sentiments about the past, present, and future emerged.

The main questions underpinning my work concern issues of identity and its transformations. In the first place, the tenacity of a 'distinct' identity within a small social group over a period spanning many decades raises questions about how that identity has been sustained. An important aspect of this enduring identity relates to the stories that were offered by Greek Alexandrians (in Alexandria and Greece), which suggested that the past was seen as revolving around what Das (1995) calls 'critical events'. One such 'critical' moment in the history of the Greek Alexandrian community was, as mentioned before, the Egyptian revolution of 1952, which led to the gradual departure of most Greeks from the city. This event appears to have shaped key institutions and defined key moments in the history of the place and the people. Yet, underlying the powerful narratives about the past and the emergence of a cohesive, if declining community, it became clear that there were significant divisions in the interpretation of the past and, particularly in relation to what the future might, or should bring about. This in turn raises questions about how Greek Alexandrians define themselves today. Furthermore, it suggests that the issue of fragmentation, perhaps along generational lines, might be a significant feature of today's Greek Alexandrian community.

A related set of questions arose from the emphasis in my research participants' narratives on the past and the history of the community, but also from the importance placed on memory and the memorialization of significant events and institutions (particularly by the older generation). Drawing on the notions of historicity and memory, I explore the different ways that the community bestows value upon its past, considering three inter-related questions. How do Greek Alexandrians use their past in a process of self-understanding in the present? How are memories transmitted across generations? And how effective might this transmission be?

While temporalities feature prominently in my informants' accounts of their individual and collective place in the world, their stories and their lives are framed in relation to the particular organization of public and private space within the city. The community as a whole, functions within the limits of a 'Greek city', which over the past 60 or so years has been shrinking radically, as the city's Egyptian population

has expanded and that of the Greeks declined. The main questions relate to the ways through which Greek Alexandrians are sensing displacement while remaining in the same place. How are the city's spatial and social changes expressed and experienced by community members? How is the city being claimed by individual and/or collective actions? To what extent have boundaries been maintained through institutions or uses of space?

In order to develop the above questions, I drew on the existing (mainly historical) literature on Greek Alexandrians, and the relevant anthropological theory regarding identity, memory and memorialization, cultural and generational transmission, as they related to the ethnographic data pertaining to the community institutions, their leaders and the different generations of community members.

2. Introducing an ethnography of Greek Alexandria

The rich and varied ethnography of Greece addresses many of the themes that relate to the Greek Alexandrians and the research questions that emerged in studying them. In their article, Karakasidou and Tsibiridou argue that the 'anthropology of Greece has undergone significant changes since its inception in the mid twentieth century' (2006:218). While in the 1950s, researchers, mainly foreign, focused on rural areas, exploring the anthropological concept of kinship, local traditions, beliefs, and values by implying a Greek socio-cultural homogeneity, more recent 'global developments . . . pushed anthropological scholarship about Greece in new theoretical and methodological directions' (2006:218). According to the same authors, after the 1970s²⁷ more attention was placed to historical trends and socioeconomic diversity (Damianakos 1981; Dubisch 1986; Papataxiarchis and Paradelis 1993); the 1980s saw the emergence of work based on gender (Hirschon 1981, Herzfeld 1988)²⁸ and cultural studies; while in the 1990s, there was a shift to cultural critique, and an engagement with the concerns of post-modernism and notions of culture as an interpretative text (Loizos and Papataxiarchis 1991)²⁹. Despite the fact that 'the methodologies remained virtually unchanged in most cases. . . [because] newly educated Greek anthropologists continued to retain many of the theories and

methodologies of their predecessors' (Karakasidou and Tsibridou 2006:219), new postmodern and deconstructive theoretical models and historical methods were also applied (Panourgia 1996; Seremetakis 1991).

In parallel to the 'Greco-centric' research pertaining to the Greek nation, other anthropological studies were made across borders and ethnicities in Greece, the Balkans, the Mediterranean, Europe and the Greek diaspora worldwide. As Herzfeld had argued, gradually 'social scientists in Greece moved from the margins of Europe' (1987: 20) to the European mainstream focus on issues of immigration, nationalism, minorities, and the like. They thus began to raise public awareness of these problems (Karakasidou and Tsibridou 2006:220).

As my thesis focuses on a Greek community in Egypt, in addition to using theoretical concepts from the international anthropological literature, I have drawn heavily on Greek ethnography, exploring concerns relevant to my research, namely issues of identity (Hirschon 1999; Herzfeld 1982, 1987), time, memory and historicity (Stewart 2012, 2016; Knight 2015; Collard 1989), space (Herzfeld 1991), generational and cultural transition (Loizos 2007; Chryssanthopoulou 2009) and so on, in Greece and the diaspora.

2.1 Identity making

As noted above, identity is the key issue of my thesis and the major concern of the Greek Alexandrians. Their narratives, social actions/events, photographs, spatial arrangements and historical accounts all involve visions of the past, present and future in the construction of their cultural identities. The issue has been discussed widely in anthropology (S. Hall 1990; 1996; Hirschon 1998; 1999; A. Cohen 2000; E. Cohen 2004; Appadurai 2006; Baumann and Gingrich 2004), and other scholars from different angles and related concepts.

The Greek Alexandrian community as discussed in this work, seems to fit better the definition of an ethnic group as envisaged by Smith: 'a discrete population who share

common myths of origin, stories and culture, who maintain a relationship with a particular geographic region and are possessed by a sense of solidarity' (1986:32). For Smith myths, memories, traditions and symbols, are powerful differentiators and reminders of the unique culture and fate of an ethnic community. Moreover, as my thesis focuses on issues of identity particularly among diaspora communities, Hirschon's definition is also relevant. Diaspora groups according to her view, are 'minority groups within a large complex society . . . distinguished from others according to criteria which are used by them and by outsiders to define an identity that is different from that of the host society' (1999: 158), and who are trying to maintain connections with their country of origin (E. Cohen 2004: 88).

Erik Cohen (2004) who studied the ways in which ethnic identities of immigrant groups were influenced by their host societies and the surrounding cultures, states that the formation of social identity (including ethnic identity, language, and religion) is 'an ongoing process influenced by changes within the ethnic group itself and in relation to others with whom they are in contact' (2004:89). The dynamic relationship between identities and social and cultural contexts is further explored by Stuart Hall (1990; 1996), who argues that identities undergo constant transformation in relation to changes in the contexts in which they unfold. According to him, cultural identity is a matter of 'becoming' as well as 'being'. He argues that far 'from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, . . . [identities] are subject to the continuous "play" of history, culture and power . . . [and that] identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past' (1990:394). Stuart Hall's emphasis on context and change and his critique of essentialised and static notions of self are particularly relevant to the case at hand, highlighting the contrast between the community's claims to a fixed and homogenous past and the realities of change and diversification that characterize life in contemporary Alexandria.

In discussing the issues of boundary, identity and authenticity, Anthony Cohen addresses the qualitative character of cultural and social boundaries to show that 'they are implicated in the formation, articulation, management and valorization of

collective identities. Superimposed on the objective markers between groups are cognitive constructions, which, because they are cultural in nature, need to be seen as matters of consciousness' (2000:2). Barth (2000) contributes to the discussion of ethnic boundaries by explaining how ethnicity works. He emphasizes that the continuing dichotomization between members and outsiders is a fundamental feature of ethnicity. Cultural features that signal the boundary between members of the group and outsiders change, but dichotomization continues and thus an ethnic group continues to exist as a separate entity.

The above theories regarding the making of identity in particular context(s) raise the question of how identities relate to historical processes and critical events. In the Greek Alexandrian context, the Egyptian revolution of 1952 and the shift in policy under Nasser had a major effect on the community and the making of the Greek Alexandrian identity. Given that diasporas often emerge from situations of crisis (war, foreign occupation, exile, forced migration, critical socioeconomic events and population replacement), anthropologists have focused on issues of violence. Das points to the significance of boundaries within cultures, and those that may cut across cultures in a context of social violence, arguing that 'Violence is actualized . . . not only in the register of the familiar but also in the grand events of political history . . . ' (2000:60).

Hirschon, in reference to the Greek diaspora, argues that 'identity is located within a historical and conceptual context, and combines a number of conceptually discrete criteria such as descent, language, religion and cultural tradition, which in the Greek case have particular configurations' (1999: 158). For the Greek Alexandrians, all of the above have particular importance in defining identity as related either to configurations developed in the home country, or to conditions in the host society. Hirschon's argument, that religion (Orthodox Christianity) plays a definitive role in Greek identity (1999: 168), is also applicable in the case of the Greek Alexandrian community, for which the role of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate is central.

Moreover, Hirschon mentions two approaches in the analysis of ethnicity, which resonate well with Greek notions of identity. The first emphasizes biological factors, where ethnicity is seen as a 'product and consequence of controlling reproduction, through marriage practices. . .'. The second approach emphasizes social and cultural factors: 'The shared traditions and the history of a group are seen to provide the main basis for a common experience, and it is upon this, that sentiments of belonging are generated' (1999:160). My ethnographic research showed that both approaches are applicable to the case of the Greek Alexandrian ethnic identity. Moreover, marriage practices in relation to the production and protection of social boundaries have been discussed by Douglas (1966). One of the issues raised by the community's younger members is the lack of appropriate marriage partners; therefore many questions do emerge in the research, both in the history of the community and its reluctance to sanction marriage outside the Greek Alexandrian community, and in the problems that isolation brings as the community population dwindles³⁰.

From another perspective, Appadurai (2006) proposed the term 'negative identities' to examine how Western modernity has globally contributed to violent actions related to social and ethnic identity. He argues that 'minorities become a problem in a modern global context because they challenge national narratives of social cohesion and homogeneity'. However, Appadurai's view does not apply to the case of the Greek Alexandrian community, because this minority does not seem to be 'a problem' for modern urban Egyptian society. On the contrary, it seems that for the declining Greek minority of a few hundred members, the problem is the social and spatial urban expansion of 'the rest of' Alexandria. Greek Alexandrians (especially the older generation) feel anxious about becoming 'extinct', as their social, economic, and ethnic identity is perceived as being under threat. As Anthony Cohen argues 'the cultural differences which discriminate people on either side of a boundary are not just matters of degree, or relativity (powerful/powerless; central/peripheral; authentic/inauthentic; god-fearing/pagan), but of kind: each party sees different issues as being at stake, or the terms in which they perceive them may be incongruent and incommensurate' (2000:2).

Appadurai (1991) has also argued that 'The landscapes of group identity – the ethnoscapas – around the world are no longer familiar anthropological objects, insofar as groups are no longer tightly territorialized, spatially bounded, historically unself-conscious, or culturally homogenous' (cited in E. Cohen, 2004: 88). The Greek Alexandrian community though, seems to be a kind of exception as, according to my data, it is a small group that despite its discrepancies, is 'tightly territorialized, spatially bounded', and historically self-conscious within the wider surrounding sociocultural environment of modern Alexandria.

While my informants make quite definitive claims (as per Smith), it seems that they also straddle different definitions regarding their identities. Therefore, the 'grammars' approach as outlined by Baumann and Gingrich (2004) can provide a useful tool in the analysis of the Greek Alexandrian identity.

Identities are approached in a holistic way by Baumann and Gingrich (2004), who examine complexity in relation to a range of various ethnographic situations. Contrary to earlier approaches that conceptualized identity as a distinction (either as sameness, or as difference), Baumann and Gingrich argue that identities are simultaneously about sameness and difference – that is, about the groups that you belong to and about the groups that you do not belong to. The authors propose three 'grammars' (verbal and ideational constructs that people use to make sense of 'selfings' and 'otherings'): (a) 'orientalization' (seeing one's own group as superior, yet also romanticizing an aspect of the other group); 'segmentation' (identity and alterity as a 'matter of context', and contexts as ranked according to classificatory levels), and; 'encompassment' ('selfing' by appropriating or co-opting selected kinds of otherness) (Suad Nasir 2006: 3). The notion of 'grammars of identity/alterity' is interesting because it demonstrates that identity is necessarily relational and involves not merely a distinction between 'us' and 'them', but a dynamic and variable set of relations between various 'us' and various 'thems'.

This perspective is helpful in relation to Greek Alexandrians, as my ethnographic data show that in the case of Greek Alexandrians there are multiple others ('thems'),

multiple forms of alterity that take on different significance and call for different responses. There is the alterity represented by Egyptians whether Muslims or Christians, which in turn is differentiated in terms of class and educational and economic background. Additionally, there is the alterity represented by other non-Egyptians who used to live in Egypt under similar conditions as the Greeks (English, French, Italians, Jews, Armenians etc.). Presumably, although they may all have been seen as ‘foreigners’ by the Greek Alexandrians (themselves foreigners in Egypt), it is likely that there may have been better or worse relations and greater or lesser affinities with particular communities. The same applies to *Egyptiotes* who are not Alexandrians and live in other parts of Egypt (now concentrated mainly in Cairo), to the *Egyptiotes* who left Egypt in the 1960s and live permanently in Greece, and to the Greeks (*Elladites*) who live on the mainland or visit Alexandria for short periods of time. Finally, there is the alterity within the Greek Alexandrian community, which is differentiated in terms of age (different generations), formal education level, socioeconomic hierarchy, citizenship or origins (eg children of mixed marriages), family and religious status (Christian Copts or Muslims married to Greek Orthodox Alexandrians), and so on.

2.2 History, Historicity and Memory

My research also showed that the role of memory and history is central in defining the Greek Alexandrian identity and that it is particularly the older generation of Greek Alexandrians who place emphasis on the past and on memorializing key events and key institutions. Therefore, in order to reflect this interest, and find out more about the ways in which different members of the Greek Alexandrian community relate to time and space constructs, I have focused on the relevant literature.

Hirsch’s and Stewart’s (2005) insights regarding the concept of historicity in relation to history were very helpful for my research. The authors claim that the Western concept of ‘history’ is generally predicated on the principle of historicism; the idea that the ‘past’ is separated from the present. ‘Historicity’, on the other hand, which refers to the way the past is culturally perceived and represented by individuals,

draws attention 'to the connections between past, present and future without the assumption that events/time are a line between happenings "adding up" to history' (2005:262).

Historicity refers to the relationship to the past that individuals establish, given not only their present position (and intimations regarding the future) but also the models available to them (Hirsch and Stewart 2005; Hartog 2015). Stewart, for example, working in a Greek village community on the island of Naxos, considers media such as treasure tales, dreams, or spirit possession rituals, as vehicles of historical consciousness (2003; 2012). His ethnography on the ways in which people imagine the past, consciously and unconsciously, in daily life, provided insights to my analysis of the ways the Greek Alexandrians consider their own past.

Historicity is closely related to memory studies. In Huyssen's definition, 'memory is not a simple, unmediated reproduction of the past, but rather a selective recreation that is dependent for its meaning on the remembering of the individual or community's contemporary social context, beliefs and aspirations' (Huyssen 1995). Both historicity and memory draw attention to the social moulding of perceptions of the past. However, Stewart goes on to argue that 'although most memories can probably be countenanced as historicities, not all historicities would come into the purview of memory because they embrace deeper time spans where the personal storage and retrieval of experience does not arise as a possibility' (2016: 89).

Halbwachs' classic sociological studies (first published in 1950; 1992), along with the more recent work of Connerton (1989; 2008) and Nora (1989; 1998), have influenced memory studies as well as the analysis of social frameworks and sites of memory. Halbwachs (1992) argues that no memory is exclusively our own because it cannot be separated from the memories of the society we live in. The concept of collective memory, initially developed by Halbwachs, has been discussed and expanded by Connerton, who explores the transmission of memories across generations and the way 'the memory of groups' is 'conveyed and sustained' (1989:1). For him, collective memory, or social memory, is organized and legitimized

through commemorative ceremonies, that is, embodied forms of rites performed by the participants through which symbolic capital is acquired.

Collective memory was also explored by Jan Assmann (2008) as an attempt to extend the concept of memory beyond Halbwachs' presentist theory of social framing (cited in Argenti and Schramm 2010:2). According to Assmann, memory effectuates the synthesis of time and identity and, moreover, 'enables us to live in groups and communities, and living in groups and communities enables us to build a memory' (2008:109). He also develops the notion of what he calls 'communicative memory', which he defines as a variation on collective memory based on everyday communication, similar to the exchanges in an oral culture, or the memories collected through oral history. The author also focuses on 'cultural memory', as another kind of collective memory, institutionalized, detached from the everyday, particular, and materialized in texts, monuments and so on (1995:126).

The issue of social memory was also addressed by Collard (1989) in her anthropological study of a Greek village. In her work, Collard (1989) studied the ways in which a particular history is experienced, conceptualized and used in the present, and the ways in which the identity of a Modern Greek community is created. Moreover, she investigated the selective process through which its members have chosen to remember certain historical periods or events and erase others, and how this type of memory comes to bear on contemporary aspects of social life, or social relations (1989: 93). Collard believes that an individual's social memory, biographical details, family claims and the community's historical past (Ottoman in the case of her study) suggest a kind of origin myth that 'links up with a national culture of . . . Greek heroism . . . [and] is conceptualized through a dichotomy within space' (1989:96-99). The community, which is divided into 'us' here and 'them' abroad in order to maintain its continuity, and thereby an enduring identity, 'must stress . . . a spatial dichotomy and a time dichotomy, which recreates its past to explain the present.' (1989:100). Collard's dual dichotomy – related to space and to time – has direct application as an analytical tool to Greek Alexandrians' notion of 'social memory' as presented in the photography exhibition of my thesis.

Focusing on the memory theme, Knight (2015) takes up from where Collard left off in relation to selective memory and understanding and explaining the present through the prism of past events. By examining how the inhabitants of a Greek town faced the consequences of the current economic crisis in the country, Knight shows that his subjects drew on the past to contextualize their experiences and gain the fortitude that would enable them to overcome their current difficulties (Knight 2015).

Collard and Knight both talk about the phenomenon of discrepancies observed among members of a community, and the different ways in which memory works and people reconstruct their past. Discrepancies were very evident from my own anthropological research into the Greek Alexandrian community, and the insights of these writers proved particularly relevant to the case of contemporary Greek Alexandrians, who tend to call upon a mix of ancient and modern histories in their construct of what they refer to as the golden age of the city (and the community).

The connection between remembering and forgetting and the importance of trauma in the relationship between past and present, which have been extensively discussed by many anthropologists, are also relevant to my work. Auge (2004), for example, challenges the notion that forgetting is a failure of memory and argues instead that it must be understood as an integral component of memory (cited in Argenti 2010: 8).

Argenti and Schramm (2010) made an additional contribution to the anthropology of memory by focusing on the issue of the intergenerational transmission of memories of violence and by investigating how political violence is remembered and how memories of this violence are transmitted. In this connection, Connerton (2008) introduces the notion of 'narrative silences' to refer to intentional, or imposed silences, or silences that originate in deeply shocking and painful experiences, in the way that Nasser's revolution was for Greek Alexandrians.

2.3 Memory and space

The connections between memory and inscriptions in space and landscapes constitute a further dimension relevant to my thesis. A key point in this respect is made by Argenti and Schramm, who argue that landscapes and places are ‘not simply “containers” or screens to which memories are attached, but rather they can be said to work as memory’ (2010:25). Earlier theories such as those proposed by Bourdieu (1977), de Certeau (1988), and Lefebvre (1991) have contributed to the spatial understanding of culture. Lefebvre’s understanding of ‘social space’ was useful in my research because he views space as socially constituted – through the ways people understand, live and experience particular ‘spaces’. Anthropologists and social geographers have also explored the relationship between space and culture, linking political economy with the social production of the built environment, at different urban scales. Massey’s (2005) study of globalization and urban development argues that places do not have single identities but multiple ones; they are not frozen in time, and are not enclosures (with a clear inside and outside). This was particularly helpful in relation to Alexandria, since it helped frame the co-existence of different kinds of space, with different values and meanings that are responsive to local, national and global political, social and economic processes.

The focus on spatial issues has challenged anthropologists to examine cultural phenomena that surround us in the cities in which we live (Low and Laurence-Zuniga: 2003:2). Low aims to ‘spatialize’ her approach to culture and society, in order to locate in space – both physically and conceptually – social relations and practices, and to theorize the urban experience (Low 1999:111). She³¹ goes on to make a distinction between the social production and the social construction of space, defining the latter as the actual transformation of space – through people’s social exchanges, memories, images and daily use of a physical setting – into scenes and actions that convey symbolic meaning (2000:128). She further argues that an effective anthropological theory of the spatialization of culture and human experience must integrate the perspectives of both, the social production and the social construction of space (Low 1999:112).

Drawing on Low's definition of the 'social construction of space' in discussing my research data and in approaching Greek residents as social agents within an urban context of different scales, I tried to explore how Greek Alexandrians experience the city, and give meanings to certain spaces and the city as a whole.

In order to find answers to all these questions, I focused on the meanings that the urban environment of Alexandria has for Greek Alexandrians. Anthropological literature contains many references to the fact that any given environment takes on special human meanings, at the individual and social levels, in small settings and large geographical areas, in cross-cultural and historical or contemporary studies. Rapoport argues that 'people react to environments in terms of the meanings the environments have for them . . . [which means that] people prefer certain urban areas, or housing forms because of what they mean.' (1982:14-15).

The role of the urban environment is also approached by Richardson (2005), who introduces the perception of the city as a 'place' where history is encountered in buildings, ruins, and monuments. Her approach, and the way she relates space to history, was useful for considering the Greek community's spaces in the city of Alexandria. Cultural inscriptions on the built environment are also studied by Barth who, in Anthony Cohen's words, argues that '. . . societies and social groups extend themselves into the world through the webs of their relationships, their economic activities and the inscriptions of themselves on the landscape. Their boundaries are located at these points of their furthest extension, the points at which they see themselves located in geographical and social space'. Barth thereby urges us to understand social boundaries in terms of people's cognitive proclivities, which are underpinned by and are expressed through their 'social practices' and spatial arrangements (A. Cohen 2000:7).

In Greek anthropology, there is an increasing interest in the exploration of culture in relation to spatial arrangements and objects, as a form of physical manifestation of culture. According to Karakasidou and Tsibiridou, the 'anthropological study of Greece's highly urbanized contemporary society is often set either in cities and large

towns or is comparative and multi-sited' (2006:222). Hart (2005; 2006) for example, reviews past anthropological studies of space in Greece and explores how architecture reflects the historical complexities of nation formation and state building. Herzfeld's work was also relevant to my own to the extent that he was exploring social dynamics around monumentalized history and issues of history and place in the Cretan town of Rethymno (1991:3). Herzfeld studied conservators and citizens of Rethymno as they negotiated the 'ownership' of history: Who defines the past? To whom does the past belong? In exploring the meanings of the built environment for Rethymno's inhabitants, Herzfeld found that their interest in it had more to do with personal histories and the immediate social context than with the formal history that attracted the conservators. In my case study, spaces and buildings were approached as vehicles of memory. My reference, for example, to key sites in Alexandria drew on Herzfeld's approach and Nora's theory, as relevant to my discussion because they stressed the link between material objects (including buildings) and memory.

Nora's (1989; 1998) work on the theory of memory studies has been especially influential in establishing the connection between memory and place. His conception of 'sites of memory' – *lieux de memoire* – gives prominent attention to the various ways in which memory is spatially constituted. For Nora (1989), memory is attached to 'sites' that are either concrete and physical – urban space, burial places, objects etc that embody tangible notions of the past – or non-tangible – celebrations, spectacles and rituals that provide an aura of the past and occur geographically as links between material culture and memory. Nora distinguishes between history and memory by relating memory with primitive or archaic societies, and history with modern societies. For him, 'memory is life, born by living societies founded in its name. History, on the other hand is the reconstruction . . . of what is no longer. Memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a representation of the past. . . Memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects; history binds itself strictly to temporal continuities, to progressions and to relations between things' (1989: 8-9).

Rose-Redwood et al. (2008) also discuss the social role of memory in relation to space and time, proposing social frameworks and sites of memory as analytical models to explore how memory (in social life and political culture), is related to the past and present, and the way in which man-made public spatial elements embody public identities and histories, commemoration or oblivion for emotional, economic, political or ethnic reasons, particularly in times of political change, conflict and crisis. Considering that the texture of memory also extends to 'the world of objects' (Huysen 2003:9), I argue that the social, political and economic transformation of the Greek Alexandrian identity over time is actually embodied not only in the built environment of the city, but also in the numerous objects and photographs that were provided for the exhibition.

Following Azaryahu and Foote (2008) views, that discuss spatial narratives of time and historical sites, I will use both the exhibition space in the *Elliniko Tetragono* (the rooms in the Greek Consulate) and the exhibition itself (the visual material), as a 'narrative medium'. I will also show how the photographs and the objects offered by Greek Alexandrians for the exhibition evoked historical memories of identity and relationships between collective memory and urban space³².

2.4 Generations and cultural transmission

Drawing on my research I would argue that the relationship between the different generations is of great importance to the Greek Alexandrian community. And since this is also a study of the transformation of the Greek Alexandrian identity over time, my thesis focuses on the following questions: how has this 'distinct' identity evolved in the course of successive generations? How do generations differentiate themselves from each other and from the official discourse of the older members of community? How do they react to the sociopolitical developments in Egyptian society and the Greek community? What types of mechanisms do they employ to reproduce themselves over time?

Generations in the Greek Alexandrian context are approached not only in relation to temporalities and historicities (as devices through which people conceptualize the past, the present or the future), but also in relation to cultural transmission. The concept of 'generations' has been extensively discussed in literature and has been used in many different ways. The original meaning is the biological-genealogical one, which 'indicates that descendants of a common ancestor take on average about thirty years to marry and have children' (Jaeger: 271). However, the term as described here, is equivalent to historical, or social generation.

According to Ortega y Gasset, a generation in the sociological sense comprises an age group of men and women who share a common mode of existence or concept of life. The members of the same generation coincide in time, are actively or passively involved in the events which happen to them, accept and/or partially create similar attitudes and values, share a common image of the world and of life, and finally have a common fund of aspirations and tasks to be fulfilled (1933:15-19). A generation as defined by political sociologist Karl Mannheim, in his writings on political generations in 19th-century Germany, comprises people who share the same 'identity of location, embracing related "age-groups" embedded in a historical-social process' (1952:292). Mannheim assumes that 'a formative period during adolescence is the basis for the formation of new generations. He thus describes historical generations as secondary phenomena, which can be derived from certain concrete configurations in time' (cited in Jaeger 1984:283). My research has shown that the behaviour and profile of each generation of Greek Alexandrians are linked to distinct historical experiences that their members shared not only while growing up, as Mannheim suggests, but also throughout their lives.

Lison-Tolosana's (2014) attempt to clarify the relationship between a specific disruptive experience and different age groups, can have useful challenges regarding my thesis. By discussing the dynamics and the relations between generations in a small Spanish town after the civil war, he argues that 'age is an important element in the community's system of relationships'. He describes the 'traditional roles . . . according to [one's] age, and . . . the social conditions under which new age-groups or

generations are formed' (1983:170). He suggests that a generation is conditioned and formed by (a) the cultural legacy from former generations, (b) the historical situation(s), and (c) the new contribution(s) of the members who compose it. Moreover, he emphasizes that younger generations have fresh and distinct attitudes, which are 'the prelude to a change in the social life. . . '. He then goes on to say that 'while "structural time" implies stability, permanence, enduring qualities, "generation time" is accompanied by innovation and change' (1983:200-201).

From another perspective, Loizos, in discussing the issue of generations in forced migration in Cyprus, states that the Cypriot refugees who were forced from their homes in the summer of 1974, from babes in arms to the elderly, all experienced the same major disruptive political event, the same 'severe life event'. But 'the impact of displacement, their life course perceptions of displacement, and thus their internalized experiences, differed' (2007: 205). To describe those who shared a common traumatic experience, the author uses the word generation in the 'common historical moment' sense, and adds that the term 'cohort' as defined by Ryder (1965) could also be applicable.

Where Loizos and Lison-Tolsana seem to agree is that in circumstances where change is radical, diverse perspectives across generations can be expected to be more marked than in contexts where there is greater social and cultural continuity. This point is especially relevant to the case of the Greek Alexandrians, given the critical events that have affected the stability and well being of their community. It emerges particularly clearly in narratives about the Egyptian revolution of 1952 and more recently in the Greek Alexandrians' reactions to their declining numbers. In other words, transmission, or the lack of it, reflects not only the dynamic of generational relationships themselves as pointed by Mannheim (1952), but also the changing conditions of the society.

For Loizos 'forced migration introduces a different kind of time, disjunctive in the sense of dividing experience into before and after periods' (2007:205). Although Greek Alexandrian residents experienced a sense of dislocation of a different kind, the

members of each generation are bound together mainly by shared negative or positive experiences of life before and/or after the Egyptian revolution.

From another perspective Davis, who attempts to apply 'Lisonian' methods (Spanish generations) to Libyan tribesmen (lineages) and to the official Libyan historians engaged in 'rewriting' history (1989:104), states that the 'generation provides a structure of reactive reinterpretation in which the emphasis is on discontinuity' (1989:110).

For the younger generation of Greek Alexandrians, it is true that they aspire to greater freedom and greater independence. However, for these culturally defined intergenerational boundaries, Barth argues that, 'making a distinction does not necessarily entail drawing a boundary' (2000:17). Sharing his view, Anthony Cohen maintains that boundaries 'do not necessarily entail the distancing [between groups] but, rather, may provide opportunities for social engagement "across" the boundary' (2000:7). The ways in which the above applies to the older and the younger generations of Greek Alexandrians will be discussed in the next chapters.

In relation to cultural transmission in diaspora, Chryssanthopoulou demonstrates that it is through the family that Castellorizian immigrants in Perth (Australia) 'experienced continued homeland identity across generations. . . [and] place great emphasis on family history as part of their individual and collective values, myths, and ideologies' (2009:83). My research, however, without implying that the family is not important in the creation, transformation and transmission of a sense of identity among the Alexandrian community, does not devote much attention to the family in this process. Instead, it examines the role played by the different institutions and especially the school, in transmitting the Greek Alexandrian identity from one generation to another. The question which then arises, is what role may formal educational institutions play in attempting to perpetuate particular values and ensure continuity.

3. Research Methodology

In Alexandria, I collected ethnographic data by using traditional anthropological tools of methodology, conducting fieldwork in the city, focusing on the places that are central to the Greek community. Participant observation was carried out by following the everyday activities of local people and by attending community social events (religious ceremonies, social gatherings, cultural and school events etc). I also conducted 45 individual interviews, some as open-ended, others as semi-structured interviews, as well as 16 group interviews with a limited number of people in generationally defined groups. I explored the various historical dimensions by extensive reading of the literature on the Greeks of Alexandria, the archives of the Greek community in Alexandria and Athens (ELIA), as well as school archives and the Michailis Library, where I studied relevant documents and newspapers.

The participants in my research were Greek Alexandrians belonging to different generations, genders and social classes. I also included (although to a lesser degree) members of families of mixed marriages and some Egyptians with Greek nationality, mainly with reference to school issues. However, as most official posts are filled by men, wherever I mention the role of the institutions, the male perspective is predominant. During my fieldwork, I relied on personal networks and snowball sampling, given that the size of the community is small and that I know most of its members personally. The fact that they are concentrated in very specific places around the city made them very easy to track down (Bernard 2006).

Due to the inward-looking character of the community, which will be analysed in the next chapters, most social activities take place in community areas – which I define as areas belonging to different Greek institutions in Alexandria – or other places usually owned by Greeks (pastry shops, restaurants etc). Therefore, the key sites for my research were those where the community meets, such as the *Elliniko Tetragono*, the Greek Orthodox churches, the Averofeio Greek School, etc. What struck me though was the fact that during the whole two years of my research on only two occasions was I invited to someone's home in order to conduct an interview. Most

interviews were conducted at the *Enosi*³³ (the Union), since Alexandrians of all ages consider this to be the most convenient place for gatherings and meetings.

As an anthropologist I felt the need to explore, in Barth's words, the 'cognitive operations and imagery that people use to conceptualize their acts, social groups and environment . . . [and to learn] by becoming immersed in joint action with people' (2000:25). At the same time, I designed my research according to a collaborative approach. Although collaboration has long been an important part of anthropologists' applied and public work (Stull and Schensul 1987; Wright and Nelson 1995), it has only recently become central as a necessary condition of both applied and academic work. Lassiter (2005a: 83) defines collaborative ethnography as 'the collaboration of researchers and subjects in the production of ethnographic texts, both fieldwork and writing', and argues that it offers researchers a powerful way to engage the public with anthropology. A positive aspect of this method presented by its supporters is that, by including the informants in the process, it reveals a greater number of perspectives and views. In a number of studies, collaborative research is also seen as a method that involves a 'giving back' in the form of advocacy and attention to social needs, or as an ethical and thus morally preferable approach to research (Fluehr-Lobban 1991; Lassiter 2005a, b).

Being aware of the criticism regarding collaboration, I saw it primarily as a tool through which I could engage the Alexandrian community in my ethnographic research, and to this end I followed a number of strategies. In my research, collaboration did not include the final co-writing of my ethnography; instead, the participation of my informants in fieldwork took the form of focus groups, community forums and, in particular, the organization of an exhibition. When I started my research, my initial idea was to explore the city itself, an approach that had very strong components of the experiential; what did it mean for Greek Alexandrians, what did it feel like to live in the city, and related questions. But my original plan of following people's individual paths and trajectories through the city space proved to be unproductive, not least because of the ways in which people currently relate to the space of the city in the context of the community's increasing

isolation, as presented in chapter six. Furthermore, given the emphasis in my research participants' narratives about the past, memory and issues of identity and place, organizing an exhibition on the history of the community appeared to be a potentially fruitful way of accessing people's responses and furthering my understanding of what memory sources they had and recognized, valued, and wished to share as part of a collective story.

By organizing an exhibition, I wanted to go beyond the spoken narrative and explore other aspects of what it meant to be a Greek Alexandrian. In other words, I tried to seek out different kinds of information, records and insights that I would not have been able to obtain if I had used only traditional methods. The advantage of doing an exhibition in addition to conducting interviews and participant observation was that it proved a good way to get a sense of what constitutes a community, what belonging to a community means, what role memory plays, and how different people and different generations respond to these sorts of temporalities. Community is a relational concept; how people relate to each other and, in the case of Greek Alexandrians, how they relate to particular spaces, particular times and institutions. It was easy to obtain specific insights from individuals, but as I was interested in the community and community formation, the exhibition proved an excellent tool through which I could explore it in action. The exhibition was important because it was collaborative; it was the process of collecting the material as much as the exhibition itself that gave me on the spot insights into how things work. Reactions to other people's reactions helped me to capture this key relational aspect as well: the social dynamics that emerged in the process of making the exhibition. The large number of photographs that my interviewees kept as items of special value in their homes and the predominance of the community buildings as a theme or context in most of them, made me realize the enormous functional and symbolic importance they assigned to both the photographs and the spatial elements (such as Greek neo-classical buildings). This encouraged me to pay more attention to the visual elements of Greek Alexandrian culture, and to explore all the issues discussed in my thesis³⁴ through the extensive use of visual material and methods.

Through the exhibition and the kinds of photographs and information people provided, the choices they made, as well as the comments, reactions and responses to discussions about the different images (photographs and films), two central themes emerged: the memory of a glorious past, a very strong sense of the golden age, and a generational divide. By organizing the exhibition I wanted to reflect this interest, and gain insights into the ways the different generations thought about the past, present and future and what materials and ideas they had in relation to the time and space of the Greek Alexandrian community.



Figure 2.1. First public event at the *Enosi*, 2011



Figure 2.2. Third public event at the *Enosi*, 2012

In order to publicize my initiative and get the community involved, I organized some public events under the title 'Something is happening in the City'. The title was chosen in an effort to generate excitement about the project and as a way to highlight its initial focus, which related to the Greeks' connection to the city (fig 2.1 and 2.2). The main events included screenings of documentary films showing the history of the Greeks of Egypt, which were always followed by discussion with the audience. Five screenings took place at the *Enosi*, two at the school and one at the Elders' House. These community forums provided the framework around which a series of other activities took place, thus contributing to my ultimate aim of creating the exhibition. I viewed it just as much a means of encouraging public dialogue as collecting ethnographic and photographic material. Within this framework, and given that young Alexandrians were more familiar with the use of new visual technologies, two activities were organized especially for them: one with the school

students and one with the 30 to 40 year olds with whom I collaborated in the production of their own visual representations³⁵.

As my research involved various forms of the visual – primarily pictures (mainly photographs) and films in an attempt to explore the different themes examined in the thesis – it aimed to contribute to the field of visual anthropology and its methodologies. Ruby (1996) argues that visual anthropology is dominated primarily by an interest in pictorial media as a means of communicating anthropological knowledge (ethnographic films and photographs) and, secondarily, by the study of pictorial manifestations of culture. Banks and Morphy (1997) discuss the role of the visual within contemporary anthropology. The two authors distinguish between the study of visual systems and visual culture, and the use of visual material in research practice; they also distinguish between the role of visual material in the presentation and consumption of anthropological knowledge from its role in the production of such knowledge. Drawing on their ideas, I used visual materials not only as useful research tools, but also as a means to study the visual manifestations of Greek Alexandrian culture.

Pink (2012) sets out a carefully selected set of critical contemporary advances in visual methodology (2012:14), in which she considers visual methodologies as a set of approaches to working with the visual in research and representation. In my research, alongside the traditional techniques, I followed Banks' (1998) classification by dividing my visual methods into three broad activities: I studied the community by producing my own images (video and photos); I examined pre-existing visual material (mainly family and community photographs and documentary films), which I used in my photo-elicitation methodology and the public forums; and, as mentioned, I collaborated with community members in the making of the exhibition.

As the main visual materials used for the exhibition were photographs depicting different times, spaces, occasions and people, the concepts relating to the communicative and representational power of photographs (Bouquet 2000;

Edwards 2005 etc.) were central to the thesis, alongside the analysis of the production of the exhibition and the related issues of communication and politics of representation (Kratz 2002; Tagg 1988; Hall 1997).

My work has benefited from the insights provided by a number of studies focusing on the social functions of the changing design of museums (Bennett 1995; Hooper-Greenhill 1992, 2000) and from some influential anthologies, which have been decisive in the analysis of museum practices (e.g., Lumley 1988; Karp and Lavine 1991; Karp et al 1992). But over the last few years, museums and exhibitions, and the issues of collaboration involved in their production, have also become of great interest to anthropologists (Clifford 2004; Fluehr-Lobban 2008; Peers and Brown 2003; Phillips 2003). Bouquet examines how anthropological theory can be used in museums, and more specifically in the making of exhibitions (2000). However, from the rich bibliography on the subject, it is the work of Kratz (2002) that was most directly relevant to my thesis as it examines the museum exhibition as a complex cultural experience, and as an arena for cultural and intercultural mediation. Her work provides a good account of how she came to curate in Kenya and the United States an exhibition of 31 photographs from her fieldwork amongst the Okiek people. She looks at how the meaning of photographs is produced intertextually through the relationship between word and image, subject and viewer, in varying contexts, pushing the field of exhibitionary communication and politics of representation to a new level. Drawing on her work and by paying particular attention to the various elements that only photographic collections can explore, I will investigate a number of issues such as: How does the exhibition I curated extend the current discussion of the politics of representation? Does the fact that this exhibition was devised from within the community for the community make the issues different? My thesis will therefore attempt to shed some new insights about how photographs are read and what photographs and exhibitions communicate.

We have a number of insightful suggestions from authors such as Sontag (1977) and Barthes (1981) about what social uses photography may serve, exemplified in early works on the critique and theory of photography. Social approaches to the history of

photography concentrated more on the social contexts of making and using images and less on the photographs as texts. Visual anthropologists have contributed to this movement with their analyses of historical photographic practice as cultural behaviour (Ruby 1988; Edwards 1992). These studies attempt to provide insights into the conditions of production and consumption of photographs, so that the meaning of the images can be comprehended as negotiated rather than fixed (Ruby 1996). Edwards (2005) reviews the growing recognition of the importance of the material and sensory stimulation in the communicative power of photographs. The central tenet of her argument is that photographs are not merely images, but social objects, and that the power of these social objects is integrally entangled with the nature of photography itself (Edwards 1999, 2003; Edwards and Hart 2004; Wright 2004). These debates contributed to my approach to the photographs encountered and produced during my research. I also focused on the photographs not only as things having a value and a life-history of their own, but also as sources of all kinds of information when I examined the context, place, persons and artifacts they presented.

The ethnographic data collected during my fieldwork and my archival research played a central role in the exploration of all the issues and questions addressed in my thesis, leading to the final writing of my ethnography. In addition to the written text, a DVD presenting the visual material of the exhibition is also included as a 'visual appendix' to my thesis. However, the presentation of the exhibition as visual work should be seen primarily as a form of documentation in relation to my ethnography, rather than an autonomous piece. The reader will be asked to watch it before chapter four. However, to facilitate the reader while reading the thesis, the visual material of the exhibition (apart from the three videos and the audio recording) is also presented in a printed format in Appendix I.

CHAPTER THREE

Historical background of the Greek community in Alexandria

Based on existing literature and historical sources, this chapter will provide the historical background of the Greek community of Alexandria and place it in the context of the Greek diaspora. The community's history will be discussed within the broader spatial and cultural context of Egypt and the Mediterranean area (including Greece), with particular focus on the development of its social, political, economic and cultural organization, from its formation in the early nineteenth century up to the present.

The community's place within the cosmopolitan environment of the city will be shown (up to the mid 20th century), together with its connections to other foreign communities and to the Egyptian population. The chapter will attempt to explore the social dynamics of the Greek community's history and its transformation over time with regard to the social characteristics of its members and the nature of its institutions. These issues will be approached with reference to two different contexts, both of which contributed and influenced the community's existence and character: The Greek state (homeland) and the Greek Orthodox Church.

Finally, this chapter will briefly present the reasons for the depopulation of the Greek community and its consequent decline in the 1960s. In order to understand the structure of the community today, questions such as how the political, social and economical transformation of Egyptian society – in the decades after the Egyptian revolution of the 50s – influenced the community and determined its current composition in terms of institutions and people; the differences among generations will also be considered and discussed.

At this point and before touching on the history, I would like to present the terminology used throughout my thesis. The use of the term community follows Warner's views, according to which 'a community is a socially functioning whole – a body of people functioning as a 'specific organism with its own social structure, which

sets it apart from other similar organisms'. Consciousness of this distinction gives the community members a sense of mutual belonging (1941:785-796). On the other hand, Anthony Cohen argues that a 'community must be seen as a symbolic construct. A key dimension of the symbolic approach is the identification of perceived boundaries that delineate and distinguish social groups; the awareness of community thus depends on the members' consciousness of this perceived boundary' (1985:30). Hence, communities and their boundaries exist essentially, not as socio-structural systems and institutions, but as worlds of meaning in the mind of their members. Even though contradictory, these two approaches provide a valuable theoretical framework with which to address communities.

Although the term 'community' is broadly used in the literature to refer to ethnic entities abroad, according to Chasiotis³⁶ (1993: 20-21), who studies the Greek diaspora, 'an immigrant population living in a host country is called *paroikia*³⁷ [παροιμία] and its members *paroikoi* [πάροιχοι]'. The term has no direct English equivalent, but its literal meaning is 'living near someone else's "household"', that is, an organized entity. This term is also used among the *Egyptiotes* to describe not only the Greek presence in the country as a whole, but also the Greek population in smaller entities, like the *paroikia* of Alexandria. However, even if *paroikia* is the main term the Alexandrians use to address themselves, henceforth and in order to refer to all Greeks who live in Alexandria, I will use the term community, which is more common in literature.

Chasiotis (1993) also argues that 'the term *koinotita* (the official institution which literally means community) may be applied to an ethnic-religious entity, into which the members of the community organize themselves and is recognized by the host country as a private chartered body'. The *koinotites* administered themselves through a charter of statutes they themselves had drawn up. Depending on their size and available economic resources they address the needs of the *Egyptiotes* through the establishment, operation and management of philanthropic and charitable institutions and activities. These organizations create a feeling of belonging in a

community and help preserve ethnic identity. Henceforth when referring to the official institution of the community, I will use the term *koinotita*.

For the purposes of this thesis, I will address three different periods in the history of the Greek community in Alexandria. The first includes its establishment, expansion and prosperity, which extends from the early 19th century to the mid 20th century. The second includes Nasser's regime, a period of turbulence and insecurity that resulted in a large number of community members leaving Alexandria; while the third covers the years from the mid 1960s up to the present time and is an era of decline.

1. Greeks in Egypt: From the early 19th to the mid 20th century

Egypt, the host country of the Greek community, has one of the longest histories of any modern country, appearing in the 10th millennium B.C. Within the broader geographical context of Egypt there exist smaller spatial and cultural clusters of different ethnic communities, which were formed in the last few centuries. Modern Egypt was formed, politically and socially, over three consecutive historical eras, namely: Ottoman rule (1517-1798)³⁸, colonial rule (1798-1953)³⁹ and independence (1953-today)⁴⁰. Non-Egyptian, mainly European, groups were concentrated in the country's largest cities, including Alexandria, endowing them all but particularly Alexandria with a multicultural character. Political changes and economic developments in Egypt played a vital role in the establishment, prosperous growth, and later, the decline of the various ethnic communities, the Greek community included.

Greeks started settling in Egypt in the early 19th century, when Egypt was still a province of the Ottoman Empire ruled by Muhammad Ali Pasha⁴¹ (from 1805 to 1848), who had set out to modernize Egypt along the lines of a European-style state and stimulate trade by attracting Europeans to the country. The favourable policy of Muhammad Ali and his successors towards foreigners, the large-scale opportunities provided by the expanding cotton market, the construction of important public

works, such as the Suez Canal, from 1858 onwards, and the privileged environment created by the British colonial presence and the Capitulations⁴² (a set of privileges provided to foreigners) were the main reasons for the migration of Greeks to Egypt and their establishment in the country from the 19th century onwards⁴³ (Cleveland, 2009: 65-66; Kitroeff, 1983: 8-11).

It has been argued (Yallourakis, 2006; Hatziossif, 1983) that before the systematic settlement of Greeks during the 19th century and their formation into organized groups, some Christian Orthodox Greek-speaking populations were already established in some Egyptian cities (Cairo, Alexandria, port of Damietta). In the Ottoman society of the 18th century, where identity was based on religious affiliation, the Greeks in Egypt were part of the local Greek Orthodox community or *Millet-i Rum*⁴⁴, which was headed by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria.

The Greeks who started moving to Egypt became part of the broader entity of Greek people living outside Greece, namely the Greek diaspora⁴⁵, which alongside that of the Jews and the Armenians is considered as one of the most important historical diasporas⁴⁶. Initially, this movement consisted primarily of wealthy merchants who were part of the Greek trading diaspora around the Mediterranean and the Black Sea and who expanded their networks extensively into Egypt. These merchants were active mainly in the sectors of finance and exports. The new Greek elite prospered alongside the other European residents, controlled a quarter of Egypt's cotton exports and was prominent in banking and commerce as well as the nascent industrial sector. In the second half of the century, the number of people arriving in Egypt increased, and the migrants started engaging in a wide range of economic activities. Thousands of workers also came to work on the construction of the Suez Canal (Ntalachanis 2015: 15-30).

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Greeks in Egypt were a homogeneous group united by a common ethnic origin, language and, for the most part, by the Christian Orthodox religion. At the same time, however, they were highly diverse in terms of

local origin, citizenship, place of residence in Egypt, professional activities, social class and economic status. Greeks settled not only in the big cities like Cairo and Alexandria, but they also lived in the newly founded cities across the Suez Canal area, and other smaller cities and towns throughout the country (Ntalachanis 2011: 8-17).

The prosperity of the Greeks was further reinforced by the British occupation of Egypt. The British occupied the country in the aftermath of the nationalist uprising by Colonel Urabi in 1882, on the pretext of protecting the foreign minorities of the country against anti-Christian riots that erupted mainly in Alexandria. A number of historians have analysed the reasons behind the British invasion, citing the priority of geo-strategic, economic and religious motives, but the fact remains that until the First World War, the British governed Egypt as *defacto* colonial rulers, and in 1914 it became a British protectorate (Galbraith and al-Sayyid-Marsot 1978; Hopkins 1986). Although the protectorate was annulled in 1922 and Egypt declared independent, the country continued to endure British intervention in its affairs long past the Anglo-Egyptian treaty of 1936, which was supposed to grant Egypt more independence. Britain's control over the political affairs of the country remained predominant until the early 1950s and its direct influence ended in 1956 with its defeat in the Suez Crisis.

1.1 Living in a 'multi- cultural' environment

The coexistence of different groups in Egypt formed what is traditionally called a 'cosmopolitan' society. The rich historiography (Mandilara 1998; Minoglou 1998; Frangakis-Syrett 1999; Quataert 2000) on Mediterranean city-ports suggests that 'cosmopolitanism grew as a consequence of the activity of different ethnic groups that took advantage of privileges and opportunities for growth and prosperity, stimulated by external demand' (Sifnaiou 2005:107). Although privileges and opportunities did in fact attract different groups to Egypt and especially Alexandria, the term cosmopolitanism has become central to many debates over its content and definition⁴⁷.

Following Baumann's (1999) argument on the multicultural riddle, I would say that in the case of Alexandria, we are dealing with different levels of inclusivity and different

kinds of communities. Before the 1950s there were the 'national' groups (what the British refer to as expatriates), such as French, British, Italian or Greek residents (fig 3.1). There were also groups that claimed to have a shared ethnicity but did not have a nation-state until relatively recently (Armenians, Maltese). Finally there were the religious minorities such as Jews, Copts etc. All these different groups made up the multi-cultural environment of urban Egypt, but had very different relationships to the Egyptian nation-state (and to other nation states in some cases). Baumann argues, that to solve the riddle (which lies at the heart of the issues that shape our search for a multicultural society), we need to rethink what is meant by nationality or the nation-state, by ethnic identity or ethnicity, and by religion as a basis of culture (1999: VII). In other words he suggests that the terms culture, nation, ethnicity and religion, are contested, unstable and blurred.



Figure 3.1 'Multi-cultural' gathering, unknown date (by Zechary)

Although an extensive literature exists on cosmopolitanism (Werbner 2008; Hannertz 2006; Theodossopoulos and Kirtsoglou 2010 etc), much has been written on cosmopolitanism in the Middle Eastern region and in Alexandria in particular, which has been enshrined as the exemplary cosmopolitan space in the Middle East (Zubaida 1999, 2002; Hanley 2008). Halim argues that in certain 'canonical' literature texts by

Cavafy (1992), Forster (1982), and Durrell (2005), and in some commentators and historians such as Keeley (1996), Lagoudis-Pinchin (1977), and Liddell (1974), who have accepted the canon 'uncritically', one can find the most simplistic views that support and advance a Eurocentric form of Alexandrian cosmopolitanism (2013: 45). Over the last decade these ideas have been strongly criticized by a number of scholars (Fahmy 2012; Mabro 2006) who support the view that Alexandrian cosmopolitanism was a product of colonialism, which excluded the Egyptians from the discourse⁴⁸. This Eurocentric view, which was also shared by most members of the Greek community and is still apparent in the narratives of older Greek Alexandrians, could provide an answer to why the mostly European groups consistently refused to become assimilated within their host society in Egypt.

Kitroeff (1983) states that among the different groups who lived in Egypt, the British held the political power, while the French provided the cultural and intellectual leadership. Although members of all groups worked and sometimes lived side-by-side and interacted socially, each community guarded its distinct religious or ethnic identity, justifying their failure to assimilate into the local population as the consequence of a series of differences that were framed in terms of origins, customs, language, religion and culture. In addition, very little intermarriage occurred among foreigners of different origins even within the same religious groups, with the Greek community showing the greatest degree of endogamy. In the social sphere the Greeks, like the other foreign communities in Egypt, kept very much to themselves and mixed with the other foreigners and Egyptians mainly for business purposes.

Despite the problems and subtleties of definitions, there seems to be an underlying agreement that integration⁴⁹ implies a series of adjustments that a diasporic community undergoes, which results in its people becoming part of the fabric of the host society, while allowing their diasporic identity to remain intact. In many cases, assimilation comes about for the third and subsequent generations, who are left simply with a sentimental attachment to the past of their forefathers both in the host country and in the land of origin. Christopoulos notes that 'among the phases of a community's life that mark progressive integration are: increased incidents of intermarriage;

involvement in the political activity of the host country; expanding economic transactions; changes of citizenship; and adoption of the language of the host country by immigrant families for domestic communication' (2007: 36-37).

Studies of several Greek diaspora communities in the U.S.A, Australia and so on (Anagnostou, 2003; Chryssanthopoulou, 2009, etc), have shown that while the first generation of immigrants preserved many characteristics of their Greek identity, the majority of the second and third generation Greeks has been (in different degrees and ways) assimilated into the host country. But this was not the case with the Greeks of Egypt, and especially with Greek Alexandrians who, although they may have been second or third generation (biological) immigrants by the 1960s, strongly resisted any incentives to adapt to Egyptian culture. This feeling of alienation that the Greeks of Egypt experienced within Egypt is vividly described by the writer Pieridi-Filippo (1986) in his memoir: 'How have we lived so blissfully for so many years, like plants with their roots far away from this country's ground, inside pots, with soil that we ourselves carried here?'

Greeks, although permanently resident in the country for three or four generations, did not begin even to think of integrating – at least until the late 1960s. It was only then that they realized that if they wanted to stay in Egypt (see below), they would have to adjust to the new situation and undertake certain changes in order to narrow the gap dividing them from the indigenous population. Nevertheless, although the Greek Alexandrian identity is in the process of major transformation, assimilation still does not seem to be a desirable option, so that the few hundred Greeks who have remained in Alexandria lead an isolated existence.

It seems that fear of assimilation was more pervasive among Greeks who lived in host countries that they considered to be culturally inferior, such as Egypt and other African countries, than in western countries. An aspect of this phenomenon can be interpreted through the way other civilizations are viewed within the national narrative of the Greek state. Avdela (1997:55-62) argues that the Greek school texts she analysed reveal that the Greek national narrative mainly promotes the concepts

of continuity, preservation, homogeneity, resistance and superiority since these qualities are considered to be the foundations of the Greek identity. In this discourse, Greek identity is viewed as superior, as a result of the continuities that are postulated to exist since antiquity, and confirmed by the established and recognized influence of ancient Greece on Western civilization.

Herzfeld also argues that 'ancient Greece is the idealized and intellectual ancestor of Europe' (1987:1). In discussing Eurocentric and ethnocentric ideology in Mediterranean anthropology, he argues that 'Greece is symbolically both holy and polluted. It is holy in that it is the mythic ancestor of all European culture; and it is polluted by the taint of Turkish culture [which] Renaissance Europe viewed as the embodiment of barbarism and evil. To varying degrees, the same paradox applies to the entire Mediterranean region, the "cradle of civilization" from which (western) Europe considers itself to have emigrated long since. . .' (1987:7).

In the Greek national discourse, as it appears in the school texts, civilizations are also assessed according to a hierarchical scale, with European culture (that of the developed and powerful nations of Northwestern Europe) at the summit; European superiority rests, on the one hand, on its influence over other civilizations, owing to its technological and economic development; and, on the other hand, on its ancient Greek origins. Thus, Greek identity appears to have inherited a culture whose importance is universally recognized (Avdela 1997:55-62). But the superiority of the Greeks of Egypt also derives from the credit they claim for contributions to the development of Egypt economically, technologically and culturally.

The Greek state's narrative concerning the superiority of the Greek nation in comparison to other nations coincides in time with the prevailing ideology of 'orientalism' that, according to Said (2003), stresses the superiority of European culture over the Orient, and expresses its duty to civilize it. According to Kazamias, 'the dominant Egyptian-Greek perception of the Arab population was . . . largely filtered through a Eurocentric 'orientalist' perspective, which saw it in stereotypical terms as less civilized, potentially fanatical and usually unreliable' (2009: 20).

One reason Greek Alexandrians provide to justify their refusal to assimilate with the Egyptians, aside from cultural differences, is religion, specifically Islam. One is reminded of Baumann's views on the ways in which religion is constructed as fixed and as a basis of difference (1999:69-79). As we have seen, Orthodoxy remains a crucial element of the Greek identity⁵⁰ and the preservation of the Orthodox Christian faith is considered of utmost importance. The negative features Greek Alexandrians attribute to Islam also reinforce this conviction. They describe Islam as a conservative and old-fashioned religion, which largely defines the culture, the lifestyle and beliefs of the Egyptians, and makes them narrow-minded. This way of life is seen as far removed from their own⁵¹.

Frangoudaki (1997:163) observes that, according to the national narrative, the superiority of a civilization can be judged based on its ability to shield itself from any external influences; these are assumed to be threatening, unless they are perceived as technologically and economically advanced, which, in turn, identifies them with the superior, 'more civilized' Western-European culture. Thus we observe that Greeks who migrated to western countries, such as the Americas, Australia and so on (under very different migration conditions) started to become assimilated from the second generation onwards.

2. The establishment of the Greek community in Alexandria (1843-1952) (1st period)

According to official sources, one-third and at some periods almost half of the Greek population of Egypt were settled in Alexandria (cited in Ntalachanis 2015:133), while other ethnic groups (British, French, Italians, Armenians, Jews etc) constituted a quarter of its population (cited in Kitroeff 1983: 13-14). For several, mainly economic factors, foreign investments were encouraged in this city and resulted in an economic and social boom. In a matter of decades, Alexandria grew into a *European* city and became the financial and cultural capital of Egypt⁵². From the 19th century Alexandria was the country's largest port, export centre, and the major headquarters for most of the cotton merchants, with their large warehouses and financial institutions

connected with the cotton business.

Greek merchants engaged in import and export trade between Europe, Egypt and the Levant and, in contrast to other Europeans, they had the advantage of familiarity with the Levantine mentality and close, often personal relations with Muhammad Ali's court.⁵³ What distinguished the Greek population from other communities in Alexandria was its size – it constituted the most numerous⁵⁴ and best organized community at the time⁵⁵ – the existence of a homeland very close to Egypt and its heterogeneity in socio-economic terms (Ntalachanis 2011: 8-17).



Figure 3.2 A Greek photographer's shop, unknown date (by Topis)

The Greek community during the first period was highly complex socially, with members from extremely disparate socioeconomic backgrounds. It resembled that of the Italian, the Maltese, the Jews, Syrians and Armenians, insofar as it had a majority of lower-middle and working classes. In this they differed from the British, French and Belgian communities, which were made up of wealthy entrepreneurs, and in the British case, of senior government officials. At the top of the social hierarchy were the cotton exporters and the factory owners who were considered to be the notables and the leaders of the community. Their position depended on their ability to provide



Figure 3.3 Accounting office, unknown date (by Topis)

social services and employment to community members. Alongside the wealthy cotton exporters and industrialists lived those who in the literature are referred to as the 'petty bourgeoisie' (Kitroeff 1983:10; Karanasou, 1999), the class of small-scale property and shopowners (fig 3.2 and fig 3.3). Besides owning some of the city's most well-known coffee houses and patisseries, entertainment venues, theatres and cinemas, they included, producers, artisans and traders, plus white-collar workers, technicians and artisans (tailors, grocers, carpenters), as well as street peddlers, waiters and the like, and constituted the largest group in the social structure of the community. Greeks were also active in many other areas of society. They found employment in the cotton sector as managers and employees of export companies owned by Greeks or other foreigners. Up until 1920, when the cigarette industry was automated, Greeks formed the majority of skilled workers in the trade. During the interwar period the number of white-collar workers (office clerks and company employees) grew considerably and a middle class was created and played a prominent role within the life of the community (Karanasou 1999:30-32).

The few merchants and their families who settled in Alexandria in the first half of the 19th century formed a nucleus that started gradually to expand. As their numbers grew, the Greeks felt the need officially to establish their presence in the city. The organization of the Greek population of Alexandria was structured around three official poles, which came to be considered historical associations with a long and important past: The Greek Koinotita of Alexandria (GKA), which although not the only one in the city, was the first to be established, and the main official body around which Greeks of Alexandria were and are organized; the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and all Africa, which represents the Orthodox population of Egypt and all Africa, and had been there the longest, and the Consulate General of Greece representing the Greek state.

2.1 The Greek *Koinotita* of Alexandria

The institutional life of the Greeks, which consisted of many associations, organizations and clubs, was extremely rich. But the most influential in terms of political, economic and cultural life was always the *koinotites*. The *koinotites* were associations of Greek nationals, or people of Greek origin, initially responsible for the provision of education and welfare to the poorest community members (fig 3.4).

The Greek *koinotita* of Alexandria was the first *koinotita* to be founded in Egypt. Known as the *presvigenis* (first born), it became the institutional model that was adopted by all the other Egyptian Greek communities ⁵⁶. Before its establishment, the small Greek community there had already opened a school and a hospital in the monastery of Agios Savvas, ‘The school and hospital of the *Graikoi*’.

The Alexandrian *koinotita* was governed (according to its statutes) by the general assembly (*sineleusi*) of its members, which elected the nine members of the *koinotita* board⁵⁷. It owned property⁵⁸, immovable and movable, received all kinds of donations and money from membership fees and legacies, and also enjoyed various forms of regular and occasional income. Its finances however have always been its weak point.

The budget often ran at a deficit, which was covered by bequests and donations, while at other times solutions were sought outside the community, such as loans or subsidies from the Greek government (Soulogiannis, 2005:112-120).



Figure 3.4 The *koinotita* board during the 1950's (by Topis)

The *koinotita* was traditionally controlled by the local Greek notables since its members were essentially wealthy individuals and the most prominent among them presided on its board. From its establishment until the 1950s, subscription fees were high and only members had the right to vote and be elected. The representative nature of the community was thus very restricted. During the community's prosperous years, but also today, members of the *koinotita* have to be Alexandrians of Greek origin, holding Greek citizenship.

The first Greek *koinotita* in Alexandria was established in 1843 under the name 'Greek-Egyptian *koinotita* of Alexandrians'. It was the first organization to challenge the authority of the Patriarchate, which had dominated the community's social life until then. The *koinotita* consisted of organizations that served the needs of Greeks living in Alexandria and, thanks to the support of the financial elite, provided welfare services that neither the Patriarchate nor the Greek state were prepared to offer (Karanasou 1999:30).

In 1887, the *koinotita* came under the legal jurisdiction of the Greek state and changed its name to 'Greek *koinotita* of Alexandria'⁵⁹. Its character became more ethnically exclusive, as membership was restricted only to those with Greek citizenship. However, the increasing influence of the Greek state over the *koinotita*, and the fact that it was officially recognized and protected by Greece, did not change its character, which remained independent. And it continued to serve only the interests of the Greeks in Egypt rather than the interests of the Greek state. Its independence from both the (Greek Orthodox) Church and (the Greek) state was its main source of strength and legitimacy as a representative body of the community (Karanasou 1999: 31-32).

With donations from the *evergetes* (benefactors), the *koinotita* was quickly complemented by supporting institutions that were necessary to meet the needs of the community, while preserving the ethnic and religious identity of its members. The more the *koinotita* thrived, the more its activities and charitable work expanded and, as a result, it became an example to be followed by all the Greek communities of Egypt and the Middle East. Schools, orphanages, nursing homes, associations of various kinds and a large number of clubs and societies sprang up quickly and were 'admired' by all Alexandrians because of their largely philanthropic purpose and their impressive architecture. They became the 'landmarks' of a unified society whose purpose was to educate and care for its members.

2.2 The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria

The Greek *koinotites* of Egypt differed in structure from those of the Ottoman Empire⁶⁰, as they had little dependence on the Church, which created some friction in their relationship with the Patriarchate of Alexandria.

The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and all Africa⁶¹ is second in rank of the fourteen existing Autocephalous Orthodox Churches. Located in Alexandria, its spiritual jurisdiction extends throughout Africa, which is counted as a single geographical region in this case. In terms of ecclesiastical status regarding the

Orthodox Patriarchs, the Patriarch⁶² of Alexandria ranks second to the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. The Patriarchate of Alexandria, which claims to have a history of two thousand years⁶³, was founded in the 16th century in the monastery of Agios Savvas and started to come into prominence during the 1830s owing to the arrival of thousands of Greek migrants (Soulogiannis 1999: 30-37). The Patriarchate was designated then as specifically Greek Orthodox⁶⁴, while most of its clergymen were/are Greek, or Greek-speaking (most of them have studied in Greece), its church services are held in the Greek language⁶⁵, and the Patriarch himself has always been Greek.



Figure 3.5 The patriarch and some of his flock, 2011

The Patriarchate of Alexandria, although an independent authority subject to Egyptian law, has maintained its close relationship with the Greek state. After the establishment of the modern Greek state, the preservation of the Greek Orthodox character of the five traditional patriarchates⁶⁶, including the Patriarchate of Alexandria, became a matter of foreign policy for the new nation, which claimed authority over all the patriarchates.

The Greek *koinotites* of Egypt were founded and organized as purely Greek, but the Patriarchate insisted they should be Orthodox and open to non-Greek Orthodox

residents. The *koinotites*, however, refused to compromise and did not amend their statutes to include other Orthodox Christians, accepting only those of Greek origin. As some historians point out, the relationship between the *Koinotita* and the Patriarchate faced problems from the time of its inception (Karanasou 1999; Soulogiannis 2005). Soulogiannis, who has maintained close relations with both institutions as the chosen community historian par excellence, believes that the problems arose from the desire of both sides to interfere in each other's business (2005: 271).



Figure 3.6 The Patriarch blessing members of the community on Easter day, 2012
(by Koutoupas)

For example, when the members of the congregation of the Patriarchate increased in number owing to the foundation of the *koinotites* and unions and the influx of several thousands of Greeks into Egypt, the *Koinotita* asserted its claim, via its own executives, to participate in the decision making with regard to matters concerning the Patriarchate. The Patriarch, on the other hand, liked to remind the *koinotita* authorities that he was the religious leader of all Orthodox Christians and not only of Greek citizens.

Between 1857 and 1960, the relationship between the two institutions became increasingly tense, reaching a boiling point during the tenure (1939-1966) of Patriarch Christoforos II, when both sides entered into a legal battle. Their differences were not only of a material nature (property reclamations) but also of an ethical/political nature. The Patriarchate disagreed with the involvement of the community in the elections for the appointment of a Patriarch; they also claimed that the Greek community (GKA) systematically prevented the Patriarchate from being involved in the education of Greek students⁶⁷, while the Greek government supported the GKA in its anti-Patriarchate campaign (Soulogiannis 2005: 257-277).

From the 1960s on, however, relations between these two institutions began to normalize and today they appear to be quite healthy. Nowadays, the church acts as an important link connecting all Greek Alexandrians. The major importance given to their religious identity is very apparent on Church holidays (especially Easter) when most Alexandrians attend services and participate in the celebrations (fig 3.5 and 3.6).

The Greeks of Alexandria I met during my fieldwork, feel a sense of pride and superiority owing to the mere presence of the Patriarchate in their city, but also because the Patriarch himself takes part in almost all community celebrations, and knows most of its members personally.

2.3 Relations with the Greek state: The Consulate General of Greece

Most of the institutions of the Egyptian Greeks have had good relationships with the Greek state, possibly because they were dependent on it only in theory and always retained their autonomy and independence. The GKA, as a Greek legal institution (subject to Egyptian law), traditionally maintained close relations with the members of the elected Greek government and its executives (especially the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture), through the Greek Embassy in Cairo and the Consulate General in Alexandria (Soulogiannis 2005:277).

Alexandrians take pride in the fact that the Consulate General of Greece (CGG)⁶⁸,

founded in 1833, was the first diplomatic representation of the Greek state abroad⁶⁹ and as such it has a historical character. Although is mainly responsible for the issuing and renewing of passports of Greek citizens, the licensing entry (visa) of foreign nationals in Greece etc, its presence in the city of Alexandria is highly symbolic. In contrast to the Greek Embassy in Cairo, the CGG of Alexandria has always been closer to the issues of the Greek community, and the consul attends all ceremonies and events and develops personal relationships with its members (fig. 3.7)



Figure 3.7 The president of the *Koinotita*, the Consul and the Patriarch at the traditional New Year's pie cutting, January 2012

The Greek state, through its representatives in Egypt, provided aid to the community (mainly through the *koinotita*) every time it had financial or other problems. It also dispatched financial aid during emergencies, as well as ethical/political assistance or mediation towards solving problems, which arose, mainly but not exclusively, between the Greeks and the state authorities of Egypt⁷⁰. The GKA, for their part (and this is something which is always emphasized in any history book about the *Egyptiotes*), contributed morally and materially to the nation and sent its young men to fight in any wars that involved Greece (Balkan wars, WWI and WWII etc.). Apart from the donations by Alexandrian benefactors to Greece for the creation of a number

of public buildings such as stadia, universities and so on, the GKA and other institutions of the community offered financial aid to Greece every time the need arose⁷¹.

3. The turbulent period of the departure in the 1950s and 1960s (2nd period)

Over the following six decades (1956-today), Egypt was ruled autocratically by three presidents, Gamal Abdel Nasser (1956-1970), Anwar El Sadat (1971-1981), and Hosni Mubarak, from 1981 until his resignation in the face of the 2011 Egyptian revolution (the so-called Arab Spring), which was when my research started.

The mass departure⁷² of the Greeks coincides with Nasser's regime, and has been interpreted by many historians as having been caused by external and internal factors involving the community. The main external factor is considered to be the emergence of Nasser's indigenous nationalist and socialist movement. This began with the revolution of 1952, followed by the Triple Aggression of the Suez Canal in 1956, which led to war with Great Britain, France and Israel and the subsequent expulsion of the British, French and Jews from Egypt. It culminated with the nationalizations in the 1960s, which discouraged most foreigners from remaining in the country under conditions which became increasingly difficult (Karanasou 1999: 42-43).

Another interpretation explains the departure primarily as a phenomenon linked to social, economic and cultural features within the Greek community itself and its inability to readjust to the new Egyptian reality and hence remain in Egypt (Gorman 2009:45-60). Ntalachanis in his recent research adopts a critical-historical approach to the matter⁷³ and suggests that the abolition of the Capitulations of the late 1930s was the principal structural component that could have led to the departure of Greeks from Egypt. In his view, those privileges functioned as a protective cloak for the foreign groups and, at the same time, constituted a cohesive element for the Greek community, offering them the chance to live as a privileged minority. Thus, he concludes that, even though the sharp reduction in the numbers of the Egyptian Greek population essentially took place in the 1960s, the breakdown in

the elements that linked the Greek population to Egypt must be sought far earlier (2015: 288-297). Although most scholars propose different reasons for this departure, they all agree that the mass exodus may be explained by examining the increasing uncertainty about the future felt among Greeks in the country.

Ntalachanis also argues that the community leadership, the Greek state and the international organizations played an active role in the departure of Egyptian Greeks who, unlike the other foreigners, did not all return to the 'mother country'. What is striking about their movements is, that although their homeland was so close to Egypt, this proximity did not influence their choice of destination; indeed many of them (almost half) chose destinations that could not have been further away (Australia, Canada, South Africa and elsewhere). This was partly a result of the political situation in Greece at the time. The country had not yet recovered from the civil war and the quality of life there was much lower than that of Alexandrian Greeks, which made it seem less inviting. According to the same author, another factor in their decision may have been the fact that at the time the Greek state did not encourage "repatriation"⁷⁴. The *Egyptiotes* feeling less welcome, may have preferred to either migrate to other countries or remain in Egypt. Any efforts, however to prevent them from moving to Greece proved largely unsuccessful (2015: 282-288).

The departure involved people of all ages and from every social and economic background⁷⁵. Within a few years, thousands of Greeks left Alexandria. In Greece and in the other countries that received them, they established their own associations and developed a distinct communal identity within their new environment.

4. The decline of the community (3rd period)

The decline of the Alexandrian community, which came about during the nationalizations of the 1960s, was felt in many areas of the economy. The big Greek industries were fully or partially nationalized. The industries that were not affected by the nationalizations and continued to operate without restrictions were those engaged in the production of pasta, pastries, alcoholic drinks, tanning and soft

drinks, many of which are still functioning.

Among those who remained in Egypt were some self-employed professionals⁷⁶; a small number of employees and technicians; older people without prospects elsewhere; some destitute and unskilled people who were barred from 'repatriation'; and, lastly, a small number of clergymen, educators, the employees of the *koinotites*, as well as officials of other organizations, who remained active (Ntalachanis 2015:353-55).

In the early 1960s, during the years that followed the massive departure of the Greeks from Egypt, the *koinotites* faced serious financial, administrative and political problems that made them more dependent on the Greek state⁷⁷. Although Nasser may have been a dictator, he was extremely popular among the people of Egypt and throughout the Arab world. Thanks to his policies, ordinary citizens enjoyed unprecedented access to housing, education, jobs and health services as well as other forms of social welfare, while the upper classes associated with the dissolute monarchy lost their prestige. Millions of impoverished Egyptians benefitted from a better education and found jobs in the public sector, managing to join the middle class (Charles River Editors, 2014). Nasser's reforms, however, not only hastened the departure of the Greeks from Alexandria, but also negatively affected those who decided to remain. A Greek businessman who owns a printing house in Alexandria, which continued to operate during this period said. 'For those of us who stayed behind, life was very difficult because Egypt under Nasser was an isolated country. We had no opportunities for work, there was a tough police regime and due to the embargo there was a lack of consumer goods. We had money but we couldn't spend it'. Emke-Poulopoulou (1986) argues that the perceived association between the departure from Egypt and Nasser's policies created an anti-Nasser ideology among Greeks from Egypt. However, this view is not shared by all Alexandrians.

Many of the Greeks who were still in Alexandria in 1960 had left the country by the end of 1967 and the beginning of the 70s⁷⁸. The main reason for this second exodus was the foreign and military policies introduced by Nasser, particularly the wars

between Egypt and Israel, from 1967 to 1973 (Aburish 2004). The 'Six Day War' in 1967, which resulted in Egypt's defeat, followed by the so-called 'War of Attrition' of 1973, increased feelings of uncertainty among the Greeks.

By 1973, so many Greeks had departed that the Alexandrian community was a fraction of what it had been. The schools started closing one after the other and the Greek *koinotita* had to face a number of problems. In the 1970s and 1980s, under Sadat, the political situation in Egypt changed in favour of the Greeks. While the decade began with a war, it finished with the famous peace treaty with Israel (Camp David), which ensured political stability in Egypt for the next few decades.

Sadat's presidency was beneficial to the Greeks of Egypt; by implementing sweeping economic reforms, he ended the socialistic controls of Nasserism. Sadat also introduced greater political freedom, and with his new economic policy, the most important aspect of which was the *infitah* or 'open door' (Waterbury 1983), he increased western capitalist investment in Egypt in sectors such as tourism and banking, and infused Greek businesses with new life.

After the mid 1970s, when the political situation became more stable, the emigration of Greeks slowed down even though it has continued systematically up to the present. During this decade, the mentality of the members of the community underwent a change. They began to realize that their future was at stake and their leaders initiated a concerted effort to keep Greeks in Alexandria. Their main concern was to preserve the real estate of the *koinotita*⁷⁹ and to prevent one of the last Greek *koinotites* in Egypt from dissolving.

Another change that took place during this period was that 'repatriation' progressively became the principal choice of Greek Alexandrians who had decided to leave Egypt. *Egyptiotes*, through their official representatives, attempted to solve many of the problems they were facing in Egypt (for those who wanted to stay), as well as in Greece (for those who had settled there). For example, in 1976, apart from the issue of compensation for Greek properties that had been nationalized in Egypt,

the few remaining Greeks requested that the Egyptian government grant the right of 'ten-year residency' to those Greeks who had been born in Egypt after 1952⁸⁰ (Chrysostomidis, 1976). Up until then, Greeks were not obliged to take Egyptian citizenship, but they had begun to apply for it, since residency and employment were no longer permitted without it (Soulogianis, 1999: 258). In addition, the Greek community was also having to address the issue of learning the Classical Arabic used in business.

The period from the early 1980s to the early 1990s is remembered as a 'depressing' decade. A man in his 50s who was then involved in the *koinotita's* affairs said that 'During that time, we made the cruel transition from idealism to realism and we started facing up to our problems' or, as Soulogiannis puts it, 'From the 1980s, not only the tradition but also the modern reality began to be emphasized' (2005:320).

In the 1980s and 1990s the main discourse, which is apparent in the Greek documentary film, *To Teleutaio Tetragono*, is that Greece stood accused of not sufficiently supporting the community. There was a perception that Greece had forgotten them, and this neglect was causing the community to shrivel and die. In fact, the support needed was more of a political/moral nature than of a financial one, since from the late 1980s the financial situation of the *koinotita* started to improve under the wise management of its president, Panagiotis Soulos. His main strategy was to sell some of the *koinotita's* property, mainly agricultural land, but also to start renting or selling real estate within Alexandria.

During this period the *koinotita* faced three main issues in their effort to induce more Greeks to stay in Alexandria: The pension scheme⁸¹, the acquisition of Egyptian citizenship, and the transfer of teachers from Greece⁸². Ties with Greece were not particularly strong at that time. Few Greek officials visited Alexandria, but few *koinotita* representatives visited Greece either.

Alexandrian Greeks tend to view the 1990s as a more optimistic decade. The economy of Egypt improved greatly under the rule of Hosni Mubarak, as his reform

programme, which aimed at boosting the private sector and reducing the size of the public sector, gave a new impetus to life in Egypt (Nagarajan 2013:28-37). His reforms also benefitted Greek businessmen in Alexandria⁸³. According to an oral account of the Greek Consulate General, an estimated 80 Greek businesses were active in Alexandria in the early 1990s⁸⁴. Today the few hundred remaining Greeks continue to be active in certain areas. They either own small or big businesses and shops (which remained in their hands during the time of nationalizations and were inherited by the next generation), or they are employed by the various Greek associations in the city.

The year 1993 was pivotal for the community. The two-day celebration of the 150th anniversary of the founding of the *koinotita*, which took place in the community's stadium, attracted politicians, artists and journalists from Greece and sparked a new interest in Alexandria. It was at that time that the first serious efforts were initiated, in cooperation with the Greek state, to keep the community alive and ensure its future. They resulted in the following accomplishments: Those who had worked in Egypt and lived in Greece were now entitled to an indefinite extension of retirement benefits (the Egyptian Greeks had fought hard to acquire this right); and they could receive this pension even if they had remained in Egypt and not been repatriated. Furthermore, in 1992, the citizenship issue was resolved, replacing the need for a residence permit. Greece and Egypt signed an international treaty, which awarded Egyptian citizenship to a good number of Greeks in return for which Greek citizenship was given to Egyptians who lived in Greece. This made it possible for more Greeks to continue residing in Egypt, since it resolved many of the difficulties they were facing with regard to their businesses, property transfers and the like (Soulogianis 1999: 257-273).

The next decade presented few problems for the community. Nevertheless, the improvements did nothing to stem the flow of young people leaving for Greece; the reduction in the number of school students and the increase in enrolment of students from mixed marriages or Egyptians is something which, as we will examine below, has sparked the fear of an imminent 'Egyptianization' of the community.

5. The community during the 'Arab Spring' (2011)

When I decided to go to Alexandria for my ethnographic research in the beginning of 2011, the political situation in Egypt was very unstable (fig. 3.8). Mubarak's popularity had started to erode when it became known that his son was implicated in corruption scandals. On 25 January 2011, Egypt was shaken by civil unrest. Following the uprising in Tunisia, people began demonstrating and committing acts of civil disobedience in protest against the lack of freedom of speech, police brutality, high unemployment rates and the state of emergency laws. They attempted to overthrow Mubarak's regime and on 11 February 2011, Mubarak stepped down and the Egyptian military took control of the state (Ghoraba 2013)⁸⁵.



Figure 3.8 The Arab Spring uprising in January 2011 (Fantz's CCN web article)

The unrest in Egypt meant that I had to postpone my trip there for several months and I finally arrived in early April. The situation was still unstable, and chaos prevailed, as for a while there was no police presence. No one could predict the future and although Egyptians were very happy and proud at having overthrown their president, the Greeks did not share their enthusiasm. Unease was so widespread among the Greeks in Alexandria that many of them fled to Greece with the emergency cash the Greek government sent with a C130 military transport plane.

After a short stay in Athens, however, they had all returned by the time I arrived. Although President Mubarak had tight, autocratic control over Egypt, he was very popular among the vast majority of Greeks, because he offered stability and order. Alexandrians, who in general never involved themselves in the political life of Egypt, viewed any change as undesirable that would lead to the destabilization of the country and render their own status even more precarious. Moreover, Mubarak's regime was advantageous towards the Greeks who, as they claimed, had very good connections with the local authorities. They thus enjoyed many privileges, which they would stand to lose if the regime were to fall. In addition, the assumption of power by a candidate from the Muslim Brotherhood would put an extra strain on the Greek community because it would negatively affect all the Christian population of Egypt⁸⁶. Only some of the younger generation of Greeks supported the revolution, not necessarily because they shared its views, but because – as will be shown later – they felt closer to the Egyptian people and wanted to support them by participating in the riots and helping them in the streets.

The spring and summer of 2012 marked the first time that free elections were ever held in Egypt with the participation of all Egyptians. In those elections, Greeks were also allowed to vote for the first time, since the majority of them hold an Egyptian passport, and they wished to have a voice in the outcome of the elections. Their goal was to deter the election of Mohamed Morsi, leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, which they believed would signal the end of the Greek presence in Egypt. But in the second round of the presidential elections held in June, Morsi emerged as the winner.

What is interesting is that since the 19th century, Greeks had always kept a neutral or passive attitude when it came to the political situation in Egypt. They only followed the events that affected them on a business or financial level. But they never played an active role; being uninterested in political issues, they never took sides. As one of my informants said, 'Egyptians never bothered us Greeks [he is not referring to the nationalisations which affected everyone]

because we did not stick our nose into their affairs. We owned our businesses, we provided people with jobs, but we weren't involved in matters of the Egyptian state and its politics. We had no interest in getting involved in politics'.

6. The composition of the Greek Alexandrian community today

Community officials have been concerned about the declining population of the Greeks of Alexandria since the beginning of the 20th century. However, all the efforts made from time to time to conduct an accurate census always failed for reasons that Soulogiannis and others explain in detail (Kitroeff 1983: 15-19; Soulogiannis 2005: 302-305; Ntalachanis 2015).

During the period of my research in 2012, according to figures provided by the *koinotita*, the total number of its members was 290 and less than 800 when combined with Cairo, which is the only other *koinotita* left in Egypt. However, this figure is misleading, since, traditionally, the number of *koinotita* members was always significantly lower than the number of members of the community at large. At least half of the members of the *koinotita* today consist of Alexandrians who don't live permanently in Alexandria. The community authorities estimate that the total number of residents today is no more than 300-400 people. Moreover, not all community members are of 'purely' Greek origin, since a considerable number are people in mixed marriages and Egyptians who possess Greek citizenship and study at the Greek school. It is difficult to estimate how many people fall into the mixed marriages category.

In trying to provide an overview of the community today, I would argue that it consists of three main groups of people: (1) Greeks who have been born and raised in Alexandria (third-, fourth- and fifth-generation immigrants); (2) *Elladites* (the word Alexandrian Greeks use for Greeks from the mainland), who reside in Alexandria for short periods, and (3) people in mixed marriages.

6.1 Permanent residents of Alexandria of Greek origin

The first group consists of the permanent residents of Alexandria who have a house and fixed employment. When it comes to families, it is usually the husband who has a job. Apart from the elderly, the less well off or those without relatives outside Egypt, all the rest maintain a second home in Greece (mostly in Athens where the majority of Egyptian Greeks have settled), which they usually visit during holidays (summer, Easter, Christmas). There is a constant movement between the two countries, and as most Alexandrians are used to saying, 'We live with one foot here and one foot in Greece' (fig 3.9 and 3.10).



Figure 3.9 Celebrating Easter day in the courtyard of the Greek School, 2011

In this first group I also include the Alexandrians who don't live permanently in Alexandria, but maintain a house in the city that remains unoccupied most of the year. Most of them moved to Greece in the last three decades, the younger ones to study at Greek universities, the older ones as pensioners wishing to be close to their children who were already settled in Greece.

This group usually visits Alexandria once or twice per year for short periods of time, but they continue to maintain close ties with the community. They follow the news and often influence the decisions being made, since many of them are still official members of the *koinotita* with the right to vote for the *koinotita*



Figure 3.10 Celebrating Easter day in the community stadium, 2012

board. Many residents oppose this privilege since these Alexandrians no longer live in the city and therefore are not actively involved in the affairs of the community. My family has belonged to this subgroup for some time now. The reasons for these visits may vary: matters to do with their house (rent, bills etc.), selling property, renewing residence permits (required for those who don't have Egyptian citizenship). Others choose to visit Alexandria over Easter or other holidays in order to take part in the community's official celebrations⁸⁷.

6.2 The *Elladites* or Neo-Alexandrians

The second group consists of the Greeks from the mainland (*Elladites*) who reside in the city for a limited period of time, approximately five to six years. Among them are teachers and professors, assigned by the Greek state to teaching positions for a few years; the Consul General, the consular clerical staff, members of the clergy and employees of the Patriarchate; and finally, scholars researching the archives or conducting restoration works, and students at the Alexandria Centre for Hellenistic Studies⁸⁸ (ACHS). To the above group should also be added their family members. Although this group plays an important part in the smooth operation of the community infrastructure – since they

occupy key positions – most of them have integration issues because the Greek Alexandrians consider them foreigners to the community. Most of the people I interviewed said that it was their dream to come to Alexandria but found that the community was not as welcoming as they had expected. They always feel a constant dichotomy between ‘we’ the Alexandrians and ‘you’ the newcomers. A young woman from Greece, who has been studying at the ACHS for the past two years, expressed her feelings as follows: ‘I have yet to form an opinion on how I feel about the Greek community. I sense a hypocrisy and sincerity at the same time. Before I came here, everyone would say to me “there are so many Greeks there, it will be perfect”. But I haven't experienced much warmth’. An Alexandrian of the emerging generation, who is critical of the close-minded mentality of the older members, confirmed her statement: ‘I agree with you. There is a lot of hypocrisy in the community and outsiders aren't made to feel at home, as you might expect. People come here from Greece expecting something totally different’.

In one of the public discussions with members of the community, in which teachers and students from Greece also took part, a Greek Alexandrian from the younger generation, rose to speak and addressed them as ‘Neo-Alexandrians’, including them, for the first time, in the body of the community by giving them an identity of their own, as ‘newcomers’. Therefore, from now on, I will also use the term Neo-Alexandrians when referring to this group.

6.3 People in ‘mixed marriages’ and Egyptians with Greek citizenship

The third group, which first appeared in the 1980s, consists of people in ‘mixed marriages’. These are Alexandrian Greeks who married Egyptians, mainly Copts, but also Muslims. Unfortunately, there are no reliable statistics on their exact number.

People in mixed marriages with Egyptians are not just viewed as different by the older members of the community, but as ‘decadent’. This becomes apparent in the descriptions and negative references of their critics. A Greek married to an Egyptian invariably inspires the following comment, ‘Look at him/her, he/she

got married to an *Arapis* or *Arapina*'. The words *arapis* (masculine) and the feminine *arapina* have negative connotations in the Greek language, as they mean negro⁸⁹, slave, someone who has been oppressed by others. Greek Alexandrians use it to mean 'Egyptian Arab'; however, although this may be etymologically correct, it continues to be a derogatory term implying cultural inferiority⁹⁰.

Some of these couples have chosen to integrate into the Egyptian society, while a very few others have tried and fought to remain within the community, experiencing inequality while operating in a marginal social sphere. As Douglas suggests, these men and women are placed in an anomalous position vis-à-vis the boundaries of the community; they are in some polluting and liminal space (Douglas 1966). And as such, they and the possibilities they embody become a focus for anxiety and concern⁹¹.

As it was quite difficult to collect information about this group, and many were not willing to participate in my research, I did not include them in this study. However, young people from mixed marriages, and Egyptians with Greek citizenship who are students at the Greek school and, therefore, active members of the community did become part of it, especially in discussions around issues regarding the school.

Although all three groups make up the Greek community, only people belonging to the first group (and in some cases to the second) have the right to become official members of the *koinotita* and are entitled to play a role in the decision making.

7.The generational issue

An Alexandrian in his early 50s, who as a student was very active in community affairs, made the following remark about the relationship between the different generations of Greek Alexandrians: 'A division exists at the moment in the community, and this division is age related'.

Lison-Tolosana (2014), who studied the history of Belmonte, argues that the history of the village was primarily a product of generational relationships. The behaviour and profile of each generation of Greek Alexandrians are linked to distinct historical experiences that their members shared, not only while growing up, but also throughout their lives. As already mentioned, the main historical event that shaped them is the Egyptian revolution of 1952 with the consequent mass departure of Europeans, including the Greeks, and the major transformations that followed within the Greek community and Egyptian society. The radical changes that followed this event marked diverse perspectives across the four generations of Greek Alexandrians I recorded during my fieldwork. Following Tolosana's terminology, I also call them the declining, the controlling, the emerging, and the school generation.

In the following section I will attempt to summarize the basic characteristics of each one.

7.1 The declining or elder generation (over 70 years of age)



Figure 3.11. In Kaniskereio. The previous Elders' House, 2011

The over 70 age group may be called the declining or elder generation, as their role in public life is relatively minor but they share most of the community's memories and longest historical past. In the early 1960s, these people were

between 15 to 30 years of age. For this generation, practically everything they knew as adolescents or young adults has vanished. The major events that followed the revolution of 1952 changed their whole way of life and led to the departure of most foreigners, the Greeks included. They witnessed its effect on the community, its decline and had to adjust to conditions that were far less multi-cultural, secure and comfortable.



Figure 3.12. In Kaniskereio. The previous Elders' House, 2011

People of this generation are often difficult to locate as many live in isolation and do not join in the community's social life. Some are too old to leave their homes, or have no families to take care of them and have moved to the Greek Elders' House. Almost by accident I met some people from this generation whom I had never seen before despite having grown up in this city⁹². Some of them told me that they purposely kept their distance from community events. They said they were depressed about the decline of the community and, being disappointed in the way it is being governed, they refuse to participate. The place where one can find these 'invisible' members is in church on Sundays or other religious occasions (they usually go to the church closest to their house), or at the Greek Consulate where they renew their papers. Another meeting point for most of them is the Bank of Alexandria, where they gather once per month to receive their pension, which is sent from Greece (fig 3.11 and 3.12).

Obviously, most people in this group belong to the passive nucleus of their generation. However, there are several exceptions: active members, who not only attend all community events but also hold important positions on the *koinotita* board (two out of nine), or are presidents of some Greek associations (eg ENOA, *Ptolemaios*⁹³ and so on).

7.2 Controlling generation (45-70 years of age)

As most official posts are held by members of this generation I define it as the controlling generation. Based on the fact that their most important defining event is the 1952 revolution, it is important to note that the oldest of them were small children and most of them not yet born at that time. Nevertheless, the real impact of the revolution on Greeks began to be particularly felt after the war of 1956, when the French, British and Jews were expelled from Egypt through 1962 when the first wave of mass departures from Egypt occurred.



Figure 3.13 The board committee, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece, the Consul, the Ambassador in 2012. Behind them photos of former presidents and benefactors.

Therefore, the controlling generation of Greeks between the ages of 45 and 70 has been marked by watching the decline of the community, as Greeks

continued to leave over the next decades. This shrinkage in both population size and physical space affected those Greeks who remained in many ways and its effects have been intensified by the fact that the Egyptian population continues to multiply. Today it is believed that the total population of Alexandria has reached 8 million people⁹⁴. Thus, the shrinking Greek community has become smaller than ever in proportion to the city as a whole.

This generation received a positive legacy from their forebears. Although they did not have direct experience of the 'glory' of the past, or of the European presence in the city, they became aware of those influences through the narratives and memories of their parents, which were still vivid (fig 3.13). This group however can be defined by a contradictory element/trait. It lies somewhere in between the previous and the next generation as its members are influenced by both. The individuals are characterized by ambivalence in their opinions and decisions, because they sometimes identify with the more conservative opinions of the older members, while they also may support the beliefs of the younger members.

7.3 Emerging generation (20-45 years of age)

Individuals between the ages of 20 and 45 form what may be defined as the emerging generation and it is a time when they are supposed to begin to play a part in the life of the community. For those who were born after the 70s, their adolescence was spent in an enclosed and limiting environment. The majority of these people are unaware of what happened during the nationalizations of the 1960s and are not really acquainted with the history of the community. This generation has not experienced the European presence in the city; the city they know has always been Egyptian (fig 3.14).

This group numbers no more than 20 individuals. The main reason for its small size is that upon completing high school most young people left to continue their studies in Greece and then settled there. The few who stay usually have a

family business to take over, so they either study at a Greek university and return, or they attend an Egyptian university.

From what I was told only five people in their 20s are currently studying at Egyptian universities and planning to stay in Alexandria. Until the late 1980s there was a good number of Greeks enrolled at Egyptian universities and there used to be an active 'committee of university students' (approximately 20 people).



Figure 3.14 Members of the emerging generation at a gathering in my house, 2012

There is a unity within this generation and although they all criticize the previous generations they never oppose them in public, preferring to keep a more passive profile. As they have a future ahead of them they are positive to opening up to the Egyptian society, something the older generations disapprove of.

7.4 High School generation

High school students, being the youngest members of the community, are seen as representing its future. As the emerging generation consists of a very few individuals, the students become the backbone of the community as they are active and support all its events. The majority of high school students today (40

in total) are not exclusively of Greek origin, but are children of mixed marriages –Greeks with Egyptians or (in a few cases) other Europeans, or solely of Egyptian origins. This generation will be studied further in the last chapter (fig 3.15).



Figure 3.15 High school students organized a ball for the community to raise money, 2011.

Looking to the historical development of the Greek community of Alexandria, one can see a duality, an ethnic/national and a Greek Orthodox character. The community still maintains strong ties with Greece, through the Consulate with interdependent manifestations of continuity in the presence of Greeks in Egypt; and with the Greek Orthodox Church, which thanks to the Patriarchate, makes Alexandria the Christian Orthodox metropolis of Africa. These factors, along with its long history, have influenced the community greatly, being responsible, both for its distinctive identity and character, but also for reinforcing its inwardness and perceptions of exceptionalism.

By presenting an overview of the structure, characteristics, key official authorities and the socioeconomic status of its members, this chapter explored how institutions came to play an important role in community life. The making of the exhibition, to be discussed in the next chapter, will reveal the centrality of the institutions in producing a certain narrative about the importance of the community's history and past. What will also emerge is the issue of generational differences in relation not only to the way the past is perceived, but also to the viability of the present situation. Another important issue that will emerge is the

relationship of the different generations with the Egyptian people, an issue that has become central in terms of the preservation of the community's Greek character.

CHAPTER FOUR

Creating a community exhibition: Practice and politics

This chapter will provide detail ethnographic data and discuss a social event based on the photograph exhibition I organized in Alexandria (2011-2012) as part of my fieldwork. An overview of the actual exhibition and an exploration of how it was prepared, and interpreted by different people, will be presented in the form of visual and narrative material that reflects the social dynamics of the contemporary Greek community in Alexandria. The process of developing the exhibition raised many questions, which shaped the exhibition's form, content and meaning. Kratz argues that 'thinking about how exhibitions are made, experienced, and understood involves considering conditions that shape an exhibition, different actors involved at various moments, interpretive processes, the way people produce and invoke multiple identities through exhibitions and more' (2002: 97).

This chapter will therefore consider how the exhibition came into being by tracing its development and final display in Alexandria. It will explore the practical issues involved; how it was designed to reflect the contributions and interests of different sectors of the community. It will then move on to discuss the representational issues which shaped the exhibition; how the members wanted to represent themselves (or the community); what stories they wanted to tell about the past, the present or the future; the decisions I made about its structure and overall narrative; the omission of certain themes and their representational implications. It will also discuss issues related to politics, power and authority; how the community (as a whole and in separate social groups or individuals) bestowed value (or not) on this event, debating questions like what kind of event was it, what was the 'right' exhibition venue, who did I have to negotiate with, who would speak for the community, who would represent it, and so forth. Other issues were related to social stratification and hierarchy (political vs religious authority, power and prestige, ethnic identity, generation differences), and a discussion developed about the community's openness to 'others' in terms of time and space. What were the reactions of guests and

visitors, especially with regard to continuity and how they experienced and understood the exhibition. The chapter will also consider the negative reactions to some exhibits and what this suggests about the 'appropriateness' of the narratives being told. Moreover, through a self-reflexive view it will also describe how my own perceptions about the project developed (at this point the viewer could watch the attached DVD presenting the exhibition).

1. Collaboration, negotiation and exhibition authority

I began to explore the feasibility of preparing a photography exhibition in October 2011, in order to establish whether community members thought it was worth doing, and to determine whether I could find a venue and financial support. Based on Karp's view of exhibitions 'as places for defining who people are' (1992:4), and on the idea that exhibitions can be sites of cultural mediation and settings for representation, I decided to create an exhibition in collaboration with the community. Working with the people of the Greek community was not an easy task. Although, as a native, I had unlimited access and their full support, I knew it would be very difficult to introduce 'new projects' that would need the contribution, involvement and collaboration of all members of the community. Therefore, I saw it as a challenge and as a unique methodological tool for collecting ethnographic data while carrying out participant observation.

As mentioned earlier, in order to publicize my initiative and get the community involved, I organized four public events, which included screenings of documentary films on the history of the Greeks of Egypt, followed by discussion with the audience. By showing visual representations of the community, I was hoping to forge a personal connection with the audience and make them more enthusiastic about sharing their own representations of the community. The events took place in the *Enosi*, where most community members hang out at the weekends. However, since the *Enosi* is a place used customarily only for leisure and community balls, the notion of hosting 'unusual events' such as screenings of films and public discussions was initially rejected. I had chosen this venue because of my wish to present the community project in a non-official

environment and address people of all ages and backgrounds in a casual manner. However, the board of the *koinotita* insisted that the *Enosi* wasn't the right place for a cultural event and proposed alternative venues such as the school amphitheatre, which I found too formal and so I refused it. To attract the attention of the people and encourage them to attend the events at the *Enosi* (even if that was not the preferred location for the *koinotita* leaders), I eventually prepared invitations, which gave my initiative a certain gravitas. I also invited the Greek Consul in Alexandria and the President of the community.



Figure 4.1 Aerial view of the *Enosi*, 2012

In our initial conversations during these public meetings, I simply fielded the idea of an exhibition and tried to gauge their interest and support, for example, regarding contributions of photographs to be put on display. No one was opposed to my proposal; some were indifferent and many were pleased with the idea. Although I made it clear that these meetings were also aimed at ‘collecting’ what members of the community could offer for the exhibition, very few of them actually provided images on those occasions. Most of the photographs that made up the exhibition were collected during private meetings that took place mainly at the *Enosi* (fig 4.1). This collection and development phase lasted one and a half

years and enabled the creation of a rich palette of images, which set the tone and content of the exhibition.

By the end of August 2012, I had compiled a sizable collection of photos and comments. Eighty per cent of the photographs for the exhibition came from private collections of Greeks, while around 20 per cent were pictures which I had chosen from published books about Alexandria. During the pre-Nasser era but also until the 1980s, very few people owned a camera. This meant that photographs were usually taken by professional photographers, who frequented places where social interactions took place, such as beaches, gardens, squares etc.



Figure 4.2 Dinner of members of the community (unknown date)

Among the professional photographers who were mostly Armenian and Italian, there were several well known Greeks, like Lazar, Topis and others. Working closely with the Greek community and its institutions, these photographers covered hundreds of social events (from dance balls and bazaars to athletic events and religious ceremonies). The interchange was simple. The photographer would take a number of pictures and community members would go to his studio to pick them up and pay for them. Also, as family life was very intertwined with community life, most pictures of special family events such as weddings, baptisms and so on were also taken by professional photographers

who were present at every community event, including association dinners, athletic and school events etc.



Figure 4.3 Members of the community dance at an association ball
(unknown date)

The numerous meetings of the members of the community celebrated in an act of photographing could be seen as ritualizing the social unit (fig 4.2 and 4.3). This is what Bourdieu in his study on the social practices of photography defines as a "cult of unity" (1990:13). Photographs in that sense produced coherence and kept the members of the community, or of the various associations together—as a unit—even long after the actual get-together (1990:21).

As already mentioned, for the development process, I followed a community collaboration model that has been increasingly used by museums to create their shows. 'Collaboration' has been generally defined as 'the sharing of knowledge and power to meet the needs of both parties' (Peers and Brown 2003:1), although some scholars do not accept this model uncritically (Bishop 2012, Clifford 2004; McMullen 2008, etc.)⁹⁵. By creating a collaborative exhibition, I wanted to introduce a two-way process through which the community members would be regarded as important people whose voices and opinions would be integrated into the project. It was not long before this collaboration revealed the internal social dynamics of the Greek community: divisions and points of friction within its members, conflicting ideas and practices.

Self-representation and self-determination were the principal concepts guiding this exhibition (Phillips 2003:155-171). Most scholars agree that by broadening the basis of knowledge and participation in the development of an exhibition, new grounds for institutional authority are created. In my case, the exhibition was an independent project; it was small scale and avoided the complications that can arise in large-scale projects funded by a major institution. However, while it was conceptualized as a collaborative project reflecting on the community's identity, this did not diminish the fact that it was still curated by me, a 'native' anthropologist who had the final say in making all of the exhibit's major decisions.

In planning the exhibition, I presented a number of proposals to Alexandrian Greeks for discussion, rather than formulating them jointly at each step. The process was more of an exercise in dialogic editing (Feld 1990:241) than a joint development per se and it fit into the long-term, ongoing relationships I had with members of the community. Indeed, my discussions with the members highlighted my role in initiating the project and deciding which representations of Alexandrians would be shown.

During this process, I realized that people from different generations had diverse ideas about how they dealt with the past, and degrees of willingness to participate in a community event, such as an exhibition. Even though I had never intended or implied it, everyone was convinced that my aim was to create a historical exhibition. There was widespread consensus that the exhibition should present photographs that depicted 'the glorious past' of the community, which was a recurring theme in my conversations with different members of the community and was also an element of public discourse. Since time was a central parameter in Greek Alexandrians' view of the exhibition, and in order to capture the different views expressed by different generations, I decided to steer my way through a work path which was, in a sense, dictated by the community members' chosen ways of participating.

All of the community members involved proposed photographs in which space was a basic element: a background setting for the social events and the persons

depicted and, specifically, the city of Alexandria and landmark historical buildings belonging to the Greek community. Their proposal revealed their conviction that the dramatic sociocultural changes that had taken place over the past decades would be highlighted by showing people in relation to spatial elements. Another observation had to do with the time parameter. I realized that time for Greek Alexandrians had two aspects: the age of the community members involved and the historical time period covered by the visual material (photographs and films).

The two older generations were quite excited about the project, and agreed to bring me photographs. I decided to take advantage of their enthusiasm and engage with them productively by asking what they would like to see in an exhibition about the Greek community of Alexandria. The majority proposed old photographs from the big spring events in the community stadium, or from school athletic events. Their preference for pre-Nasser era photographs seem to suggest that Nasserism continues to represent a critical point in the life of the community, at least for older people. Others suggested placing old and new photographs of Alexandria side by side to illustrate the extent of the changes that had taken place in the city, while another suggestion was to show images of Greek buildings in Alexandria – particularly, important institutional buildings such as schools.

In contrast to the two older generations, the emerging generation (those between 20 and 40 years of age) were generally not interested in contributing to the show. They believed they had little to offer, given the historical nature of the exhibition. In a number of meetings, I asked them to bring me photographs from their private collections which they considered worth showing at the exhibition. But, somehow, they didn't find it appropriate to include 'recent' photographs and display them alongside with 'old' ones, because they thought the present was 'just not that interesting'. I asked them to think of a project that they would like to present, in order to make their voices heard, but all my efforts were fruitless.

It was apparent that they didn't feel comfortable participating in the exhibition in any way. Besides having the impression that their own records and images could not adequately portray the past, they were also critical of the way the past was being performed by the older generation. Nevertheless, they still welcomed the project, since most of their information came solely from stories told by the older generation and only a few of them had actually seen a collection of old photographs apart from books.

In order to include the youth in the Greek Alexandrian community, I invited the local high school students to create their own project for the exhibition. Eight high-school students participated in this task and, given their good relationship with modern technology, they produced a short film that was screened during the exhibition. However, although my intention had been to produce a fully collaborative piece, the students had no interest in discussing the final editing with me. I therefore edited some parts myself and produced a 10-minute film that was presented in the exhibition (the film is included in the DVD). My focus at that point was to create a film that would attract visitors, but surprisingly enough, it generated some tensions among those who viewed it on the opening day of the exhibition as will be discussed below.

1.1 Politics and power: Finances, spaces and 'ownership'

Having generated a positive initial reaction from most members of the Greek community was not enough to make the project feasible. I needed to move on to the next step, which involved getting the support of the Greek associations to help with funding, a location for the exhibition, printed material (invitations etc.) and the presence of local authorities at the exhibition. The historical importance of the three main official institutes of the Greek Alexandrian community have already been discussed in a previous chapter. However, in the process of preparing the exhibition, I discovered an underlying rivalry involving their past and their political, social, religious, economic role in Alexandria, the broader Egyptian context and their relationship with Greece.

Before proceeding, I needed to secure financial support and the Greek *koinotita* was the only possible source, given their view that the focus of the exhibition would be its historical memory. Today, most community events take place under the auspices of the *koinotita*. From the very beginning, I had made an application to the *koinotita* board members regarding the exhibition with a full explanation about my project. Although the president had agreed verbally to support it in March 2012, the final decision of the board was not taken until late September. The apparent reason for the delay was that they considered the exhibition to be of minor importance, so they kept postponing the date of the discussion. I was never under the impression that my proposal would be refused but neither did I sense any great enthusiasm for supporting it.

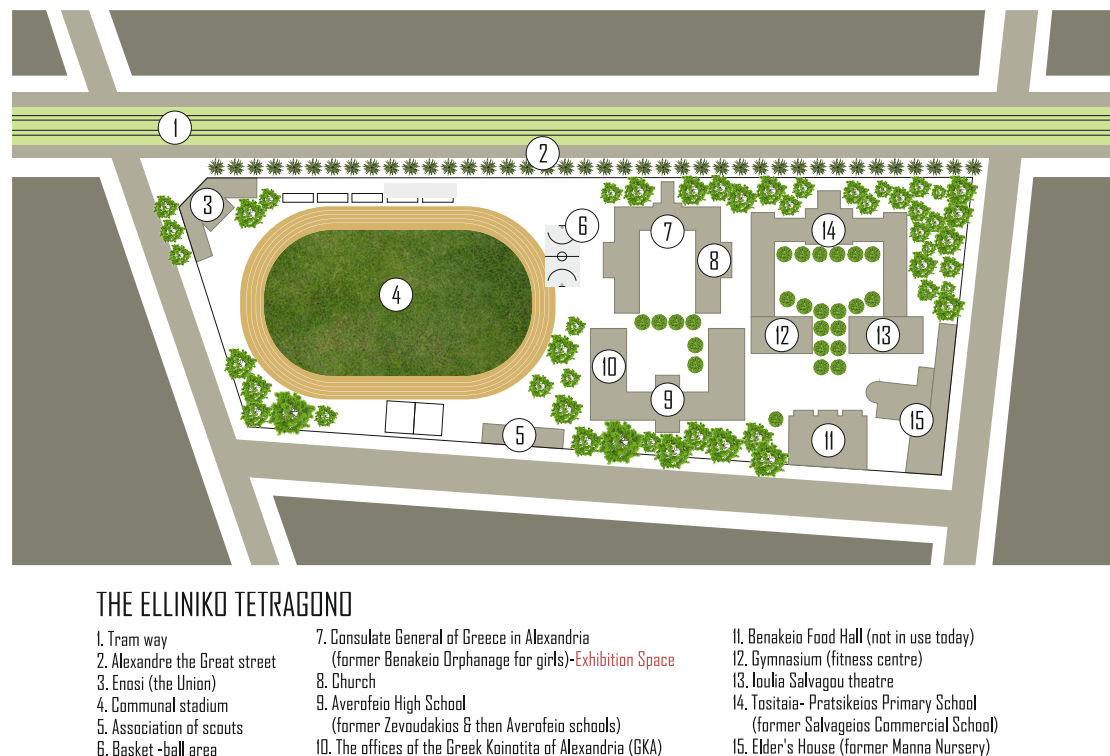


Figure 4.4 A graphic representation of the *Elliniko Tetragono*

One of the main issues up for negotiation, once approval was finally granted, was the location of the exhibition. This was because the venue would affect the way the content would be communicated and understood; the building's size, form, use, lighting, design, position, symbolic value, historical background would all play their own role.

Which space was most suitable to host it? My initial idea (during the first months of my fieldwork) was to present it at the *Enosi* in the *Elliniko Tetragono* (fig 4.4). By choosing the community's most popular meeting place (which had never before been used for an exhibition), I was aiming to make the exhibition accessible to the widest public possible, appealing to those Greeks who would never attend a cultural event such as an exhibition or a lecture.

After discussing my idea with Greek Alexandrians, I realized that they did not consider the *Enosi* an appropriate space for an exhibition. My second choice was the Hellenic Foundation for Culture (HFC), which on the contrary was designated for cultural events. However, I was still eager to explore alternative venues because my informants had reservations about the location of the HFC such a 'great distance' away and its 'unpleasant atmosphere'. However, since the HFC is located in the centre of Alexandria, a mere 10-minute car ride from the *Elliniko Tetragono* (the main point of reference), the centrality of the experiential aspect of space becomes apparent. I would also argue that because the HFC is an independent centre run by the Greek state, it is not considered 'local' and would therefore not be an appropriate place to host an exhibition on the Greek community.

Finally, I discussed the location issue with the president of the community and he said that 'we should organize the event within the *Elliniko Tetragono*, not far away from us'. He suggested that I should use the second floor of the consulate. I had no idea that these rooms existed, as they were opened to the public only once every few years, but I discovered that the space (consisting of three very large rooms) would be an ideal venue for the exhibition (fig 4.5). The fact that the building was over a hundred years old and houses the current Consulate gave the venue a symbolic authority and prestige, which I knew the community would appreciate. In fact, when I announced the new and final location to the community members who were present at one of the meetings, many liked the idea of the exhibition taking place within the *Elliniko Tetragono*. A few expressed concerns regarding practical issues: the accessibility of the venue, since the Consulate is open only during the mornings and isn't widely open to Egyptians and non-Greek Alexandrians, unlike the Hellenic Cultural Centre.

I started preparing the exhibition space and all the necessary printed material. My first concern was the invitations. I was soon confronted with a division in the Greek Alexandrian community's organization and a protocol issue: Who had the authority here, the Greek *koinotita* or the Greek Consulate? Who will invite the public? I wrote a draught invitation including both institutions, and I showed it first to the president. His reaction was unexpected. He was very upset and asked me why I had included the Consulate. 'We are the ones inviting the people and not the Consul, because we are organizing and sponsoring the event. You must remove the Consulate's name from the invitation', he said.



Figure 4.5 The Consulate General. The exhibition was held on the upper floor of the building, on the right side, 2012

The Consul, on the other hand, was also upset and said that, as the exhibition would be taking place in his domain (the Consulate), he should certainly have the right to invite people as well. He asked me to persuade the president to change his mind. In one of my attempts to discuss this issue with the president and the *koinotita* board members, I was told 'The Consul has no right to make such a demand, as the Consulate building is not his property. The building belongs to the *koinotita*, we lent it for free to the Consulate, and so it is ours'.

Fortunately, two weeks later, the board finally agreed to issue a joint invitation with the Consulate, but then they started disagreeing about whose name would

appear first. According to the Consul, protocol demanded that the Consulate (as a superior institution representing Greece) should be mentioned first.

After two more weeks of discussion, I myself found a solution. I would print three different versions of the invitation: One with the Consulate appearing first, one with the Community first, and one with the simple phrase 'We invite you. . .'. In my final attempt to convince the president to agree with the version that complied with official protocol (without which the Consulate would not host the exhibition), I gave the president a scenario. I posed him the following question: 'If you were the Vice President of the country and you had organized a big event where the President of the country was invited, who would be presented first?' I added that, according to protocol, the President (who holds a higher position) should be first. At that point, he interrupted to say that that would not be fair, as because the Vice President had organized the event, he would be more important on that occasion. I agreed with him but I insisted that protocol demanded that the President should be mentioned first. My recognition of his important role in all these proceedings was the key to securing a final decision in favour of accepting my proposal.

Reflecting on the delicate matter of invitation, I would argue that it reveals the power games played between the two institutions. In the last three years, both Greece and Egypt have faced massive changes on a political and economic level: Greece entered a prolonged depression (2008), while Egypt faced a revolution that has altered the political climate of the country (2011). During this period, the community's new president, a young and capable businessman, continued the economic policy of his predecessors and succeeded in generating more money (by renting two *koinotita* buildings (ex Greek schools). By the time of my research the *koinotita* was financially independent. On the other hand, owing to its serious financial problems, the Greek state was unable to continue support for Greek communities abroad. It is possible that Greece's ongoing financial difficulties weakened the position of the Consulate in the eyes of the *koinotita*, giving rise to the political power game played by the two institutions, with the latter trying to show its socio-political superiority and economic independence.

While preparing the themes for the exhibition, I decided to devote a panel to the Church, as my research participants had selected a number of images depicting religious ceremonies such as weddings, funerals, Easter rituals etc. However, I hesitated to present any photographs, or write any text without asking for their permission. My unease was reinforced when some members of the community told me that I had to be very careful with the Church and that I should definitely inform the Patriarch and ask for his 'blessing' (i.e. his consent).

I therefore called a bishop who represented the Patriarch and explained the situation to him, that I had collected some old photographs related to the Church, which I wanted to use in the exhibition and that I wondered whether he would like to give me some more to include. I added that I was willing to accompany them with any official text that the Church saw fit. My approach was diplomatic and influenced by my fear that the Church would feel insulted if the way it was represented was deemed inappropriate. The bishop, after listening carefully, became agitated and accused me of having stolen his and the Patriarch's idea to organize a similar exhibition. Being verbally attacked by the bishop was the last thing I was expecting in my struggle to organize this exhibition and at this point, I felt as though I had lost all hope and seriously considered abandoning the project.

Four months prior to this conversation, while I was in the middle of my efforts to collect photographs from the community, I had had a discussion with the bishop. He told me that he had this idea of collecting some photographs from the old women of the community who visit the church. I understood he wanted to do something related to women and the church, but smaller in scale and I had not therefore perceived any conflict or competition arising with the Patriarchate. I suggested that we could collaborate by exchanging photographs or ideas, but I never had a response to my offer.

When I called with a renewed proposal regarding the exhibition, the bishop would not listen but just said he was upset and hung up the phone. Not knowing how to react, I sent him an official letter explaining the purpose of my exhibition and requesting the participation of the church. Some days later, I received an

oral reply from the General Secretary of the Patriarch who said that the 'case was closed' and that the committee of the Patriarchate had decided not to participate in the exhibition in any way. At that point, I wasn't sure whether the Patriarch had been informed about all this. I later came to learn that he had not.

The arguments and negotiations regarding the invitation, the ownership of the exhibition venue, the ranking of names, and even the idea of holding the exhibition, reflected the conflicting roles of the Greek community's agencies and reveal considerable social, economic and symbolic rivalry and resentment among them. It seems that once the exhibition became a feasible project, official institutions started fighting over its ownership and leading role. These tensions reflect the broader social dynamics regarding the institutional divisions and authorities within the Alexandrian Greek community today, of which I had not been aware until then.

1.2. The community's boundaries: Exhibiting the self

Another important issue I opened for negotiation was the language to be used in posters, invitations and texts (fig 4.6). This initiated a discussion about the community's openness to other socio-cultural groups who might want to look at their past. The use of Arabic didn't even cross their minds. The immediate reaction of the president and the members of the board, when I asked about the language was 'Greek of course, this is an exhibition about the Greeks'. For the members of the *koinotita* it was clear that the exhibition was addressed to the community itself.

No one expressed the slightest desire to show and communicate its history to other nationalities living in Alexandria, not to mention the Egyptians, who would not have even been welcome to attend⁹⁶. Obviously, this was an exhibition devised from within the community for the community. In a discussion I had with the Consul about whom to invite to the opening of the exhibition, he said, 'Definitely all members of the Greek community, some foreigners from Alexandria's consulates and cultural centres and a limited number of Egyptians, mainly the upper class and educated'. He proposed that we should be very

selective as regards the Egyptians, since he wanted to avoid having women in scarves present on the opening night, unless they were the wives of important people. Feeling quite uncomfortable with his own proposal, he explained to me that some months before he had organized a Christmas event (the cutting of the traditional New Year's pie) for all community members in the Consulate. He admitted that it had been a mistake to ask the Director of the Hellenic Foundation for Culture (HFC) to bring his Egyptian students, for he noticed how awkward the Greeks seemed to feel having Egyptians in the Consulate and some even complained about the presence of 'covered women'.



Figure 4.6 The invitation, English version

My immediate reaction, which reflected my own identification with the generation in their 30s and 40s, who support the idea of opening up to the Egyptian society as will be shown later, was that the exhibition should be open to all and the Consul eventually agreed with me. I assume he was convinced that my proposal was politically correct since Greeks are guests in this country. Thus, the exhibition was open to all and the final invitation was written in three languages, Greek, English and Arabic, while the posters and exhibition texts were in Greek and English.

2. Designing the exhibition: Visual representations and narratives of the past

Feld (1990) argues that at any particular time and place several different politics of representation are likely to intersect in various ways. The crucial question is, which ones, where, when and how? The choice of a particular way of

representing people or events gives them a particular meaning, while there is often dissent over the correct, appropriate, or preferred way of representing.

When I decided to create this visual exhibition, I was aware of the fact that textual or visual exhibitions focusing on the period after the 1960s are not considered of particular interest or value in Alexandria by the members of the Greek community. It is indicative that only one exhibition about the Greek community had been organized in Alexandria in decades. My interviewees could hardly recall it, even though it was presented at the HFC only two years before (in 2009) by a young researcher from Greece. It was a photographic exhibition illustrating different aspects of life in Alexandria from the 19th to mid 20th century, but no one could give me more information about the way it was presented and understood. Any other exhibitions related to the Alexandrian community focus on important personalities of the past such as the Greek Alexandrian poet, C. P. Cavafy. Even in Athens, where thousands of nostalgic Alexandrians live, such exhibitions are very rare⁹⁷. But what all of them have in common is their focus on 'the old days', the period before the departure of Greeks from Alexandria and the fact that they are organized by some of the older and most sentimental Alexandrians. The community's past is always represented through the lens of memory and nostalgia and similar narratives also appear in almost every book written about the Greek community, whether it is an illustrated coffee table book or a scholarly one. There have been no exhibitions that cover the period from the 1960s to the present.

Kratz states that 'an exhibition's space, content, and viewpoints – its representations – begin to crystallize with decisions about what images or objects to use, how to write labels, and how to combine and arrange them' (2002:111). In writing the storyline and designing the floor plan, I carefully considered all the material collected, and all the information received from the community members, following their suggestions. But, as the curator of the event, I was the one responsible for the final decision of which images of the community would be presented, which stories would be included or excluded from the narration, which themes would be highlighted, and which interpretations should be made. My selections were also influenced by my

position as an insider, because as Peirano suggests 'in the study of our own society, the "others" are both ourselves, and those relatively different from us, whom we see as part of the same collectivity' (1998: 122-123).

I was surprised by the fact that, even though the *koinotita* supported the event financially, thus becoming its official sponsor, there was never any kind of intervention from the board members as to what content or design this exhibition should incorporate. Not one of them ever visited the exhibition space while I setting it up, or asked me for any clarifications. Instead, I was left free to take any decisions I wanted. This could be attributed to the fact that it was I, an insider, who organized the event, therefore a trusted person who 'knew' what was appropriate to include. This was made clear in the president's introductory speech on the opening night when he said, 'And who else could show better the memories of everyday life of Greeks in the city, but one of us'. I would also argue that this attitude might be due to the fact that the superiority and importance of the Greek community are considered indisputable in the public narrative; a positive portrayal would therefore be taken for granted. But it could also reflect the board's lack of experience about how an exhibition can function as a medium of community representation or disputes over meanings, divisions in the community and so forth. One week before the opening, the president of the community commented: 'You came to me many times, you wrote me hundreds of letters, I agreed to pay for the exhibition but up until now I still have not understood what this exhibition is all about'.

Although it was generally assumed by the members of the community that the focus of this exhibition would be on the 'old days' (from the 19th to the first half of the 20th century), one of my interviewees in his late 70s complained: 'The history of our community did not end in the 1960s as most of us tend to believe. Many important things also happened in the years after that decade'. Reflecting on this comment, I decided to break this 'silence', and try to create a link between the past and present by introducing photographs from all periods of the community's life. Showing only historical photographs that would emphasize temporal and personal distance would not encourage the kind of visitor relationship I hoped this exhibition would provoke. I wanted to offer

viewers a story that would assign value not only to the community 'they have lost' but also to the community they possess today. The idea of continuity was highlighted in the title of the exhibition, 'A Voyage in the Past and the Present'. In the Greek title the subject of this exhibition (the Greek Alexandrians) was not mentioned, as it was obvious to the Greeks that it was about them. However, in the English and Arabic version the title was translated as 'Alexandrian Greeks: A Voyage in Time. . . ' (fig 4.7).

Apart from including photographs representing recent historical periods, I thought of creating conditions where visitors could reflect on themselves. I, therefore, added photographs of ordinary people from all periods to give visitors (the community members) a sense of personal connection with the people shown. By so doing, I was aiming to allow the visitors themselves to become visible throughout the exhibition.

Stories that were left out included photographs of community members



Figure 4.7 The poster, English version

with important people from Greece (mainly politicians). The reason for this was that young people and members who were not involved in the administrative aspect of the community were very critical of these photographs, which they felt constituted a form of 'showing off'. For the sake of continuity, I also avoided using old photographs of visits of important people to Alexandria, such as the King of Greece, Greek prime ministers, etc. I even left out photographs of the famous benefactors of the community who are considered the most important personalities in its history. In other words, I excluded the 'great and the good' and focused mainly on everyday people in their everyday activities.

2.1 Designing the exhibition: Kinds of exhibits, themes, aesthetics, symbolism in time and space

Exhibitions themselves are a kind of multilayered, multimedia communication (Kratz, 1994) that combines visual and verbal media into spatial arrangements. In the 'Voyage through Time' photography exhibition, texts, photographs, music, books, documents, audio recordings and other multimedia forms such as videos were also included and each of these mediums had its own possibilities and constraints. The photographic exhibition was supported by archival material (school certificates and programmes), old volumes of literature, two videos, an audio recording with old songs and the written work of some school students.



Figure 4.8 The exhibition hall, the panels and the pictures

Edwards (2005) argues that photographs, as mediums of representation, are both images and objects that exist in time and space and thus, within social and cultural experience. The main material I collected consisted of black and white photographs with just a few in colour. These photos came from the private collections of my interviewees and most of them, as mentioned before, were taken by the numerous professional photographers who worked for the community over the years. The content of these images was quite diverse. The majority had themes related to school days (especially from Averofeio High

School, the principal school of Alexandria then and now), school athletic events in the stadium, water sports in the Greek Nautical Club, hobbies such as hunting, social life (parties, clubs or other social community events) and trips around Alexandria. To support the themes of my storyline, I added some well-known photographs by the professional Greek Alexandrian photographer, Topis, which I found in an illustrated book on Alexandria. These photographs depicted general views of old Greek buildings, views of the city and some community events. I also used a few new photographs of the school taken by a friend.

The final exhibition consisted of approximately 250 photographs placed on 22 large panels with accompanying captions and texts in Greek and English. Each panel was devoted to a certain topic-theme (education, religion, sports etc.) and contained a number of related photographs (fig 4.8). The information given included short texts for each panel and descriptive captions for each picture. The texts were historical in nature and were based on the two history books that members of *the koinotita* rely on when referring to its past; they were written by the Alexandrian scholar Euthimios Soulogiannis (1999; 2005). This decision reflected an attempt to use a narrative with which most Alexandrians and especially the *koinotita* members were familiar in order to tell the story of their community. However, my main concern was that the texts should be written in a 'neutral' (emotionally distant) way as opposed to the often emotional tone used by Alexandrians when they are called upon to present their history.

A primary aim was that the exhibits should be displayed in the most aesthetically attractive way possible. It took me some time to decide how I would present the photographs, what would be the most suitable size, and what material would be best for printing them. Edwards, speaking on the materiality of photographs, argues that presentational forms reflect specific intent regarding the use and value of the photographs embedded in them (Edwards and Hart 2004). I rejected, from the beginning, the idea of displaying poor quality copies of the photographs, printing them on banners, or on paper without frames. I thought a 'sturdier' material would be more appropriate for this occasion. I, therefore, decided to enlarge them and print them all on wood. This decision emerged from a specific performative desire for the images. Because these photos represented a long and

‘important’ history, printing them on a sturdy, heavy and stable material would reflect and complement the ‘gravity’ of the past.

2.2 The exhibition layout and presentation

Dean stresses that ‘designing museum exhibitions is the art and science of arranging the visual, spatial, and material elements of an environment into a composition that visitors move through’ (2001:32). Spatiotemporal flows are part of exhibition communication and promote the ways in which visitors engage with the exhibits, while movement through an exhibition should contribute to the intended or implied narratives to be conveyed.

In order to create a sense of continuity, I structured the exhibition in a way that would take the visitors through a chronological route that would end up in the present. Deciding on the themes of the exhibition was more complex. Knowing the typical classification of the community history as presented in books (which talk about institutions, education, social, economic and cultural life, religion etc.) with which community members were familiar, I decided to follow the same pattern to facilitate understanding for visitors who shared the same code. Finally, the exhibition was divided into three main parts (one in each room), each allocated to a different time period. Each room was also divided into smaller thematic sections.

The first room covered the history of the Greek community in Alexandria from the first half of the 19th century to the Second World War. This was the period when the first official associations (the Greek *koinotita* and the Consulate General) were established, but, as it covered the most important period for the Greek community and the city of Alexandria, I considered it ‘the nostalgia room’. The feeling of nostalgia was reinforced by an original recording of old Greek songs performed by a group of Alexandrian friends from the early 1960s, which was used as background.

The room was divided into the following thematic sections:

'The Greek presence in Alexandria', 'The first official associations', 'Education', 'Economic life', 'Religious events', 'Welfare', 'Cultural life', 'World War II'.

For this room in particular I followed the categories used in most albums and books on the history of Greeks from Egypt. The room also included two showcases. The one in the middle held school certificates and an old phone directory. The second case in the corner was devoted to 'Alexandrian literature' and contained Greek books and magazines published in the city in the 19th and 20th centuries.

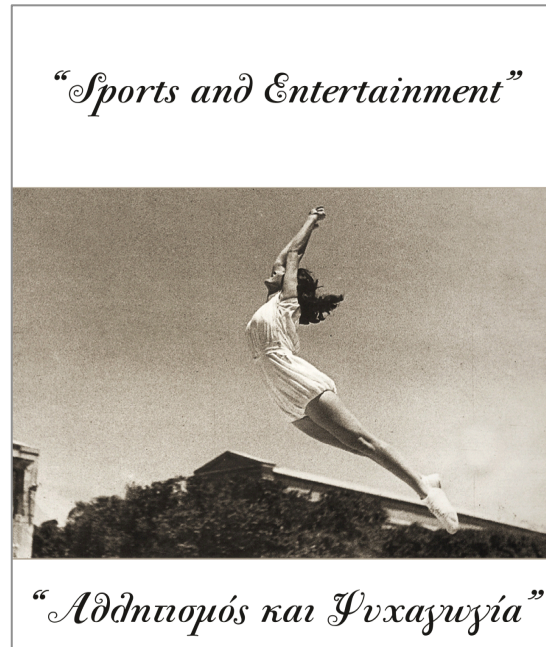


Figure 4.9 Large panel in room two

The second room, entitled 'Sports and entertainment', covered mainly sports and social life, from trips and parties to outdoor activities such as fishing and hunting. It was divided into the following sections: 'The Greek Nautical Club', 'Sports', 'Social life', 'Sports today' (fig 4.9).

This room displayed a combination of black and white photographs from the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, and coloured ones from more recent times. An edited piece (6 minutes) of an old super 8 mm film with hunting scenes from Alexandria during the 1960s was also shown on a continuous loop.

I gave the third room the title 'The Greek compound' (*Elliniko Tetragono*). I decided to devote the last room to this specific and symbolically most significant space for all members of the community, and I focused on its history. Knowing that this area was given to the *koinotita* in the early 20th century to house its most important educational institutions and supportive athletic facilities, I had chosen to show different aspects of school life in the

past and the present. By using black and white and colour photographs from different decades, I tried to illustrate its historic continuity.

The main sections were:

‘The Greek compound’, ‘School athletic events’, ‘School activities’ (fig 4.10).

I decided to use the opposite walls of the room differently in order to give visitors the impression that they were walking through history. I did this by placing old black and white photographs on the left side and new, coloured photographs on the right side of the entrance. In other words, the left wall represented the past, and the right the present. Visitors were guided by a ‘path’ that moved from past to present. The final part of this room was devoted to the school today.

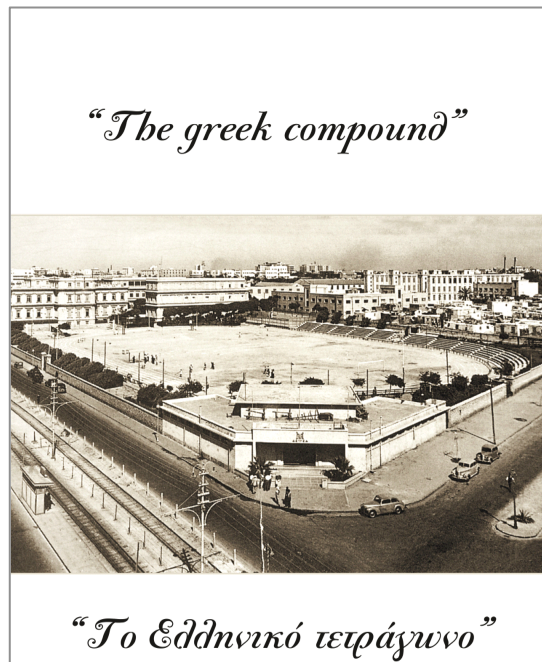


Figure 4.10 Large panel in room three

My idea derived from what De Certeau (1988) and Casey (1996) point out as different aspects of the experience of place. Both of them maintain that space can be located and created through movement; it can be existential and social.

As the coloured photographs in this room covered, more or less, the same themes (Greek folk dances, parades, athletics, concerts etc), I selected the photographs mainly for their aesthetic value. Although I was not really conscious of this at the time, I tried to ‘beautify’ the present and make it look as ‘important’ as the past.

At the far end of the room, there was a projector showing the high-school students’ experimental film on a loop, while a table with postcards written by them⁹⁸ stood in one of the corners. Wishing to cover the history of all the spaces

and structures included in the compound, I introduced two more panels, one for the 'Association of Boy and Girl Scouts' and another for 'Welfare institutions'.

3. Visiting the exhibition on the opening day: A social experience with multiple meanings

On the opening night the majority of guests were members of the Greek community. All ages were represented, while there were also many teachers, some nostalgic Alexandrians, a few Egyptians and a limited number of people of other nationalities. Although there was a broad spectrum of people visiting the exhibition, I recorded only the reactions of those who were actually represented, namely the members of the community (fig 4.11). Contacting the foreign visitors after they had attended the exhibition would have been too difficult and, in any case, my research was focused mainly on the Greek Alexandrian audience.



Figure 4.11 View of the exhibition

The most important guests at all community events, from bazaars to scientific lectures, are the three representatives of the community; the president of the *koinotita*, the Greek consul and the Patriarch, as their presence lends gravitas

and prestige to the events. If one of them isn't able to attend, he usually sends a deputy. But generally, events attract more people and are considered successful only when the officials themselves are present, especially the Patriarch.

After another period of difficult negotiations, I found a suitable date when all the three of them would be able to attend. The exhibition was going to open its doors to the public on 11th November 2012. But, one week before, and while I had thought everything was finally in place for the opening, I received a phone call from the president of the *koinotita*, who informed me that the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece would be visiting Alexandria the day of the opening. He was coming that very afternoon for a few hours invited by the Egyptian government. The president added that he, along with the consul were trying to alter the minister's programme and convince him to visit and open the exhibition.

I was quite impressed by his sudden interest in the exhibition and his desire to make it a gala occasion with food and drinks. It was obvious that the Greek minister's visit was creating some excitement and added a new meaning to the show. It seems that the two local officials wanted to use the exhibition as a means of demonstrating to the high representative of the Greek state that the community was still active, initiating important cultural events, and this one in particular was highly significant because it was devoted to the history of their community. Their excitement lasted only a couple of days, until the moment they realized how difficult it would be to change the minister's programme. On the day of the opening, when we all knew that the minister would not be coming, priorities and plans changed abruptly. If the minister wasn't going to be present, the consul (the host), president and Patriarch would not be there either. The unexpected visit meant that the 'elite' of the community (directors, presidents of associations) would also probably not be in attendance, as they were all invited to a dinner at the Greek Nautical Club offered by the community in honour of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The purpose of this 'semi-open to the community' dinner was, as the Consulate said, 'to give people the chance to shake hands with the minister'.

On the day of the opening, all the Consulate staff left to attend the welcoming event for the minister at the airport. I felt exhausted and very disappointed that the focus had shifted and that people would go to the dinner instead. However, contrary to my expectations, many community members of all ages turned up at the exhibition. The night started with two speeches given by the person who represented the consul and by the president of the community himself, who decided to come for half an hour before meeting the minister. The Church did not send a representative.



Figure 4.12 Me giving a speech at the exhibition opening (by Koutoupas)

Some days before the opening I started thinking about the content of my own speech and the way I would present it (fig 4.12). Knowing that speeches given by officials at special events usually adopt a very formal, if not pompous, language in order to reflect the importance attributed to the events themselves, I initially felt obliged to follow the same path. However, using formal language to present the exhibition was the complete opposite of the way I usually talk. Therefore, I decided to speak in a simple way and avoid the five-minute introduction where the speaker has to address all the officials present in the room by their full names and titles. So I started my speech by saying that, because I was working on the exhibition until the last moment, I didn't have time to write a speech. First, I thanked the *koinotita* and its president for his support, forgetting to mention his name. I, then, thanked the Consulate, completely forgetting to mention the

Consul himself; next I thanked the members of the community for helping me to collect the photographs. Finally, I gave a short description of the content of the exhibition. What turned out to be even more unconventional was my decision to thank the Egyptian crew for helping to set up the exhibition. Here I switched to English so that they would understand what I was saying (because of my poor Arabic I chose not to address them in their own language).

At all community events, even if they are attended by Egyptians or foreigners, the only language used by the officials is Greek. Obviously, this attitude indicates their lack of interest in communicating with non-Greeks. The speeches of the officials that night were written down on paper, had a formal character, and were presented in a pompous tone. The president, especially, made an impressive introduction talking about time. Afterwards, reflecting on my attitude, I realized that my decision not to use emotional, stuffy language to introduce the exhibition came out of my opposition to the exalted way the past is usually performed by the leading members of the community. The Greek audience, however, contrary to what I expected, welcomed my talk and many told me they found it simple, understandable and straightforward.

Although the president hadn't yet visited the exhibition, in his introductory speech, he gave a foretaste of what most visitors would feel and what their experience would be. He said that 'the visitor to this photography exhibition would feel flattered and as if surrounded by magic'. 'Flattered' because the exhibition would offer a compelling story that would generate pride and admiration for the community and its members and 'magic' because of the beautiful memories it would reveal. After the speeches, we all entered the exhibition halls. The atmosphere was very warm and emotional, and visitors seemed to experience the exhibition as a temporal flow as they moved through the exhibits.

Owing to their different backgrounds, interests and points of view, visitors to the 'Voyage through Time', related to the exhibits in different ways. Although the exhibition was open to the public for a whole month, it received most of its

visitors on the opening night. The rest of the month saw sporadic visits, exclusively by Greeks, due to its location in the Consulate. As Kratz argues, 'exhibitions are not only about gaining information. Rather, visitors experience exhibitions socially, often as part of a group, and this experience relies both on what visitors bring to exhibitions, and on what exhibitions bring to visitors' (2002:93-97).

4. Reactions from guests and visitors

As I mentioned above, the exhibition occupied three rooms. The first one was the nostalgic, the second the joyful, with photographs from the 1960s and 1970s, while the last one devoted to the Greek compound (*Elliniko Tetragono*) covered both past and present. The first two rooms were packed with people, while the third one attracted a smaller audience.



Figure 4.13 Some visitors viewing the exhibition

The rooms covered a wide array of subjects and generated positive feedback from the public, who were not only inspired by the celebratory tone of the exhibit, but were also delighted to see so many familiar images and materials (fig 4.13). Some were so excited to see photos of their family and themselves

that they returned for multiple visits bringing several of their friends. Other reactions were very emotional. Some of the elderly were crying, some were touching the photographs, pointing out a familiar face, and some were even kissing their favourites.

Interestingly, there were very few negative comments and the overall impression I got from talking with the audience was that the exhibition was 'beautifully presented'. 'Beautifully presented' might mean many things – interesting, informative, different, tasteful, attractively displayed and more. Most of the older generation said that the exhibition exceeded their expectations. I tried to understand what exactly was not expected and as it turned out, the answer was that they weren't expecting 'something so professional'. Recalling the old days, they explained to me that people nowadays simply aren't interested in the quality of the events they organize, and that consequently people aren't very interested in attending them. I also experienced this lack of enthusiasm, a sluggishness about whatever concerned the exhibition, before the opening. Some people finally turned up just because they never miss a community event, others because they were curious to see their own photographs in the exhibition, and a few came because they wanted to support 'their kid' (meaning me, as a community member), as they kept saying.

During the preparations for the exhibition, I noticed that people were looking up to me because they were surprised that I hadn't given up trying to organize it and commended my patience. In my effort to understand their reaction, they said that anyone who offers to do something for this community today is invariably obstructed by others. As a consequence, no one has the courage or tenacity to keep trying. They appeared to be surprised that somebody finally did something and the result was of a high standard. Several commented that it was a 'big exhibition and very well presented'. It seems, that an exhibition presenting the glory of the Greek community has to be very well presented.

Kratz argue that responses to, and interpretations of exhibitions are never entirely predictable because exhibitions contain so many communicative

possibilities and visitors bring their own varied backgrounds and interests to them. Exhibitions also have the potential to spark disagreement or controversy, since people with different perspectives, interests and values may object or be opposed to the ideas conveyed (2002). The only negative comments came from two Greek Alexandrians who live in Greece but happened to be in the city during the exhibition. The feature that provoked their negative response was the short film presented in the last room, the one shot by students.

The first visitor, a man in his late forties, called me the next day to complain. He said, in a very intense tone of voice, that the film was terrible and inappropriate for an exhibition on the history of the community. He criticized the poor quality of the script and the filming. When I told him that there was no script and that students were free to do and say whatever they wanted, he replied, 'That was a big mistake of yours; you should have advised them on what to say about the community'.

Two days later, another visitor came to the exhibition. He was so impressed that he proposed that I bring it to Athens. But, once he entered the third room, where the student's film was playing on a loop, I noticed that he didn't even look at the screen. When I asked him why, he said that he didn't need to watch the film as it made him feel sad just listening to what the students were saying. What upset him was the students 'poor' vocabulary, their 'poor' comments and the fact that some of them were Egyptians or from mixed marriages, therefore not 'pure' representatives of the Greek community.

For those Greeks who had left Egypt a long time ago, the film represented the ultimate decline of the community. As a result they found it very difficult to accept and completely unsuitable for presentation at an exhibition of this kind. It was not an 'appropriate' narrative; it was 'damaging' to the community's good image and reputation. They therefore maintained that it should be excluded from any potential exhibition in Athens, and erased from the historical memory. Triggered by these comments, I decided to ask some Alexandrian residents for their reactions to the film. Apart from the students who were proud of having

acted in it, most visitors watched it with indifference. When I asked the president whether he would include the film in a future exhibition in Athens, he said he would definitely do so, although he recognized it 'as the sad reality of the present'.

Long after that day the community was still talking about it. The exhibition seemed to summon up beautiful memories from the past. And in the days immediately after the opening, people could be found chatting with enthusiasm about the photographs, bringing up shared experiences and exchanging stories mainly about sports, schools and the uniqueness of the *Elliniko Tetragono*. In conversations then, I attempted to get their reactions to the theme of continuity, which was the most challenging aspect of the exhibition.

Two weeks after the opening, I had a radically different experience with the people of the community when I decided to organize another event in support of the exhibition. This was the screening of a documentary about the history of the Greeks in Egypt (with a focus on Alexandria), which had been filmed two years before for *Al Jazeera* by a Greek production company with me as the researcher (in DVD). The film was screened in the large hall next to the exhibition, where the speeches had taken place on the day of the opening. My aim was to attract more people to the exhibition and create a public discussion after the screening. I was hoping that after seeing the exhibition and the film, they would be willing to share their opinions and engage in some public dialogue. But, after the screening the atmosphere was very heavy. People were crying and I felt as if I were attending a funeral. I tried to get a conversation going, but no one was willing to talk. Everyone was too depressed.

The very next day though, people were more willing to talk, and in a discussion with some of the women who attended the screening, one of them told me: 'Listen, the film made us very sad. Not just emotional but very, very sad. You know, we lived the good days of Alexandria, but we stayed here and we saw Alexandria change, and this isn't pleasant at all. We don't like Alexandria today and we don't want anyone to remind us of its bad sides. Please, next time, when

you do something for us, try to give us hope, as you did with the exhibition; don't do things that will make us sad. We don't want to feel that we have also "died" along with the good old days'. What I didn't think at the time was that the film ends with the departure of Greeks from Alexandria in the late 1960s, and it was shown on a day when the demonstrations in Egypt were at their peak. So, it seems that the timing also resurrected the old fears of another sudden departure.

The same film was shown at a special screening in Athens to Greek Alexandrians residing in the capital and their reactions were completely different. Instead of provoking depression, the movie made them very emotional and nostalgic, and they were very happy to share their experiences from the good old days. At first, I was quite puzzled by the different response. But on reflection, I realized that the Greeks who left Egypt in the late 1960s have developed a very romantic and nostalgic attitude towards their past, along with an idealized view of Alexandria, whereas the people who stayed behind obviously had not, since they actually lived and experienced the continuity of daily life in Alexandria.

After the discussion I had with these women, I started wondering why people had been so excited by the exhibition and why they felt I had given them hope. Their comments made me think about the way I had structured the storyline. I was surprised to realize that the exhibition made no reference to sad or traumatic events. In an effort to reflect back to the community the positive image of everyday life that they wished to cultivate, I had excluded from the narrative the political events of the 1960s, the exodus of so many Greek Alexandrians and the beginning of the process of the community's decline. None of the visitors to the exhibition noted their absence and none complained about these omissions. In fact, I was never even given any photographs from that period and it was not clear whether this was because such photographs do not exist, or because contributors did not wish their personal records of those days to be exhibited. Nevertheless, by excluding those crucial events from their recent history, thus introducing what Connerton (2008) refers to as a "narrative silence" and by showing photographs of joyful moments from every decade, I

created a feeling of a smooth transition from one period to the other. In addition, my decision to focus on the everyday lives of everyday people had the most important meaning for them because, as will be discussed in the next chapter, ideological constructs and theoretical explanations often destroy actual lived experiences.

The visitors to the exhibition, as members of the community, appreciated the cheerful representation of their story. Furthermore, there was a feeling that this side of the story could suggest continuity and that the present could also be important and meaningful. I had confirmed that direction when I decided not to include high profile individuals in the exhibition and to focus on the 'ordinary' people in the community. One man I interviewed said that what was important was that it showed the lives of everyday people. 'It showed that we, the ordinary people, are also part of this community and that we also contributed to its history'.

I would also suggest that another reason for its appreciation was that the storyline of the exhibition had an apolitical character. With no references to Egyptian society, the community appeared to be living in a world far removed from the reality that surrounds it. It is apparent that the entire project of the exhibition illuminated tensions related to my being an insider and an outsider at the same time. This applies not only to how I was perceived and treated by members of the community, but also to how I responded to the challenges posed by organizing the exhibition. What became clear to me was that my intentions were not merely to obtain data, but that I wanted to provide a forum for the Alexandrian Greeks to rethink their identities and their spaces in a forward-looking manner.

Reflecting later on my decisions to exclude some key figures and themes from the exhibition (Benefactors, Cavafy, Nasser period etc), to use a slightly different language in writing the texts (less emotional and informal), and to use everyday language to introduce the exhibition at the opening, I realized that these decisions derived more from my relationship to the place and the people (my

position as an insider), rather than from the needs of my research. Those decisions, as I understood later, reflected my own reaction to the way the past was performed by the leading members of the community, while as an insider I shared the views of the emerging generations of the 30s and the 40s who were more critical of them.

CHAPTER FIVE

‘The guardians of Thermopylae’: Making identity through history

‘Greeks of Egypt who “*guard Thermopylae*”’ was the title of an article on *CNN Greece*⁹⁹ based on interviews with prominent Greeks who still live in Egypt, published in 2016. What is interesting about the title is that the Greek journalist borrowed a line from Cavafy’s poem ‘Thermopylae’, to address her guests, namely the Greeks of Egypt. She must have been well aware that Greek Alexandrians¹⁰⁰ (especially the leaders) commonly refer to themselves as ‘the guardians of Thermopylae’¹⁰¹. Cavafy in this poem used the historical event of the famous battle¹⁰², to compose a poem to honour those who set a significant goal in their lives (a Thermopylae) and defend it with their own sacrifice¹⁰³.

In the same article one of the interviewees, the former president of the *koinotita* of Alexandria and of the SAE¹⁰⁴, Stefanos Tamvakis, begins his interview with an excerpt from another of Cavafy’s famous poems, ‘Ithaca’: ‘Laistrygonians and Cyclops, angry Poseidon – don’t be afraid of them’. Here Tamvakis is referring to the difficult times that accompanied the Arab Spring and the rise of Muslim fundamentalism, which most recently has affected the lives of the Greeks of Egypt, who as Christians are afraid that they could become a target. As he explains, ‘Egyptian Greeks are urged by these verses of their favourite poet to take action. . . In this particular period, when everything around them is falling to pieces, and moral values are threatened with oblivion and extinction, they must persist and fight; they must never forget; they evolve by honouring their past’¹⁰⁵.

In this interview, it is interesting to observe the emphasis given to the use of Cavafy’s language but also the choice of poems or quotes that have a strong heroic character. By using Cavafy’s verses as a vehicle, the *Egyptiotes* identify themselves with the ‘brave warriors of Thermopylae’, who did not succumb to fear and stayed at their post despite being outnumbered, and with Odysseus,

who let neither trials, like the 'Laestrygonians and the Cyclops', nor temptations like Circe deter him from reaching his home on Ithaca.

The question raised here is why the Thermopylae metaphor is so important for the Alexandrian Greeks (and the reporter as well) and what different meanings does it convey? Why do Alexandrians identify themselves as guardians and what Thermopylae are they defending? There is an obvious analogy between the Spartans at Thermopylae and Greeks in Alexandria. Both are engaged in an act of self-sacrifice. The Greeks of Alexandria are numerically few (almost 300) and surrounded by a non-Greek population; the 300 Spartans were trying to prevent the powerful Persian army from invading their homeland, while the Alexandrians seem to feel their unique identity to be threatened by the cultural 'other', the Egyptians in whose homeland they live.

What is interesting is that Spartans consciously sacrificed themselves for an ideology (their homeland), fully aware that despite their bravery, they had few hopes of succeeding against the Persian hordes; in effect, they died for a lost cause. And yet the Alexandrians draw strength from Greek history and the associated local myths; they inspire them and prepare them for their own sacrifice, which they judge necessary to protect their unique past, their heritage and their Greek identity. Yet this too is an unequal fight, for an idea that seems to be unrealistic. The community is shrinking and most of the school students are either from mixed marriages or of Egyptian origins.

As the above interview and my own ethnographic material clearly revealed, the community puts tremendous emphasis on its history and past (ancient and recent) and on keeping its memories alive. In accordance with Halbwachs, memory here is not seen as a simple, unmediated reproduction of the past, but rather a selective reconstruction that is dependent for its meaning on the individuals' or community's remembering of contemporary social context, beliefs and aspirations. In other words, the collective memory 'does not preserve the past. . . it reconstructs it always in the context of the present' (1992:175).

Therefore, the question that arises here is what circumstances are at work that have compelled the community to place such emphasis on its glorious past and on the preservation of its memory (collective and individual)? Chapter three outlined the historical background relating to the Greek Alexandrians. In this chapter the aim is to outline notions of history and the different ways the past is culturally perceived and represented by individuals (Hirsch and Stewart 2005). It will examine such questions as, which past do Greek Alexandrians want to preserve and why; what makes it glorious and important; how is it experienced and remembered; how is it performed and reproduced; and how memories of this past are transmitted across generations. Can the collective memory of one generation be passed to the next generation and how could this transference take place?

In order to answer these questions, I will start by focusing on the glorious past they invoke, and try to detect the ways in which it is represented in official and unofficial levels of discourse.

1. Narratives of a glorious past

1.1 The official narrative of the community

The official narrative of the community, which is dominant in the public discourse, finds expression through the representatives of the aforementioned three main poles around which Greek Alexandrians are organized. The narratives of these institutional bodies overlap to a great extent and assign the same importance to their own historical value as official institutions concerned with the members of the community. They are all considered historical in the sense that they belong to a distant past, something which is accentuated by the defining term 'first-born' (*presvigenis*-πρεσβυγενής), but also by the emphasis given to this term by Alexandrian community leaders when they talk about the *koinotita* and the Patriarchate. The Consulate of Alexandria also claims its own place in history (even though it's a more recent creation), due to the fact that it was the first official representative of the newly-founded Greek state abroad.

The official narrative is produced and reproduced by various local media, such as the official speeches of the leaders, printed material (newspapers¹⁰⁶, books, etc.) and visual representations (documentaries, photographs, exhibitions etc.). But the most popular public medium these days is the Internet. Even though the community had maintained an online website for years, its promotion through online media – the website¹⁰⁷ and Facebook – did not really start to pick up until Giannis Siokas was appointed president in 2009 and it continued up to the time of my research. Moreover, collective memory is also reproduced through various performative or commemorative acts like national or religious celebrations, anniversaries (e.g. the 100th anniversary of the Averofeio School, the 150th of the *koinotita*), sites of memory (statues, monuments etc.) etc.

All three institutions, through their representatives, present themselves as the protectors, the ‘guardians’ of the community, who care about the past, present and future of its members, each appearing to have its own contribution. However, the *koinotita* is the institution which controls its assets in practical terms by providing the necessary social networks (education, welfare and the like) for its survival and the good of its members. It is therefore the voice of authority regarding its history and past. Up to the time of my research, the *koinotita* board, apart from the president who was a man in his early 40s, consisted mainly of older members from the ‘controlling generation’.

1.2 The community’s ethnic and local myths

1.2.1 Myth of origin – Alexander the Great

The introduction to the history section of the *koinotita*’s official website reads as follows:

‘The historical journey of Hellenism in Alexandria can be traced back to more than two millennia and its beginning is marked by the laying of the foundation stone in 331 B.C. by Alexander the Great.’

Lambek and Antze argue that 'the search for the foundational moment for the establishment of the self can be found in individuals and ethnic groups alike. It is linked to the notion that every story has a beginning – an idea that is deeply ingrained in our consciousness and imported imperceptibly into memory and practices of commemoration' (Lambek and Antze 1996: xvii).

For Barth (1998), myths of origin and descent constitute the primary definers of the separate existence of particular *ethnies* (ethnic groups). The idea of origins gives meaning to a community, which can derive validation from a pristine 'golden age', when men were great, since 'the greater the origins, the more we magnify our greatness, as through the past we venerate above all ourselves'.

As the quote on the official website demonstrates, Greek Alexandrians trace their ancestry back to the Hellenistic period and Alexander the Great, who appears as the foundation myth (hero) of the community, endowing its members with legitimacy and orientation¹⁰⁸. Moreover, the myth of Alexander the Great is also the national myth of Greece. It helped promote the *Megali Idea* (Great Idea): the quest for a much larger, inclusive Greek state, the dream of the restoration of Byzantium which had disastrous consequences, both military and economic, for the country in the 1920s (Dakin 1972; Campbell and Sherrard 1968). An important aspect of this ideology was the emphasis on the unbroken continuity of Greek civilization from Classical times through the Byzantine era, the Ottoman period, and beyond to national independence¹⁰⁹.

Kitroeff states that the political ideology of the *Megali Idea* at the beginning of the 20th century had a significant impact on the Greeks of Alexandria. Some aspects of this ideology were particularly useful in justifying the Greek presence in Egypt, so that speeches by diplomats, notables and teachers, articles and books all celebrated Greco-Egyptian ties that went back to antiquity. The notions of continuity and identity were integrated widely into the Egyptian context, and the claim was made that a continuous Greek presence had existed in Egypt from the time of Alexander the Great and the Ptolemies (1983:18-19). The

implications of this view were that the Greeks could claim an earlier presence in the country than the local Arab population, which gave it an inalienable right to its privileged position. While this was never made publicly explicit, the uprising of the Egyptian nationalist movement prompted Greeks to declare a special relationship with the Egyptians on the basis of ties dating back to antiquity (Sachtouris 1951:142).

This link with antiquity is regularly mentioned in official speeches by leading members of the community when addressing Greek or Egyptian officials. In the case of Greek officials, they refer to it to emphasize the enduring presence of Greeks in the city, and by association the importance of the community as a historical unit. When Egyptians are the audience, it serves to underscore their affinity with the Egyptian people and justify their right to be in Egypt, given that both nations share the same foundation myth of being descendants of Alexander the Great¹¹⁰.



Figure 5.1. Official procession in the streets of Alexandria to celebrate the erection of the statue of Alexander the Great, 1999 (SAASA collection)

The story of ethnic origin is usually represented and preserved publicly through official, institutionalised forms of remembrance, such as commemorative monuments and public statuary. In the past few decades Greek *Egyptiotes* took the initiative to erect two statues of Alexander the Great, one in a communal space and one in a public space in the city proper. In 1992 an Alexandrian

doctor complained in public that there was no statue of Alexander the Great in the city. His complaint mobilized the SAASA¹¹¹, which found a sponsor and in 1993, on the occasion of the *koinotita's* 150th anniversary, donated a copper bust of Alexander the Great to the *koinotita*¹¹². The statue was placed in the courtyard of the Pratsikios Primary School in the *Elliniko Tetragono*.



Figure 5.2 The statue of Alexander the Great, 1999 (SAASA collection)

Of an even higher symbolic value was the contribution of the Greeks to another public project in the city of Alexandria. In 1999, the SAASA, with the participation of various Greek *Egyptiotes* agencies, donated to the municipality of Alexandria an equestrian statue of Alexander the Great¹¹³. This statue was erected in a central square of Alexandria, while a special ceremony including an official procession in the streets of Alexandria was organized by the Greeks to celebrate its unveiling (fig 5.1 and 5.2). This day is referred to by the Greek *Egyptiotes* as a historic occasion where Egyptian and Greek officials from the mainland, *Egyptiotes* and Egyptians, celebrated their common past together. As a leading member of the Alexandrian community wrote on his website, 'It was during those brief moments that the equestrian statue of Alexander the Great, as also noted in the speeches of both Greek and Egyptian officials, revived the relationship between these two nations, documenting their eternal friendship'.

This statement vividly illustrates the emphasis both nations give to their shared past whenever Greek Alexandrians address the Egyptian government. I would

suggest, though, that this idea of the relationship between the two nations through a common ancestor is more widespread among Egyptians of all social classes, mainly of the older generation, rather than among the Greek Alexandrians, who, as I will show in a later chapter, are quite keen to emphasize the differences and not the similarities which they share with Egyptians.

1.2.2 Myths of the modern era – C. P. Cavafy rediscovered

The second leading figure of this narrative is the Greek Alexandrian poet Constantine P. Cavafy (1863-1933).

‘In the contemporary era, [Alexandria] has become the “favourite city” of our great poet C. P. Cavafy, This is where most of his historical poems take place, in this space and in the Hellenistic period’¹¹⁴.

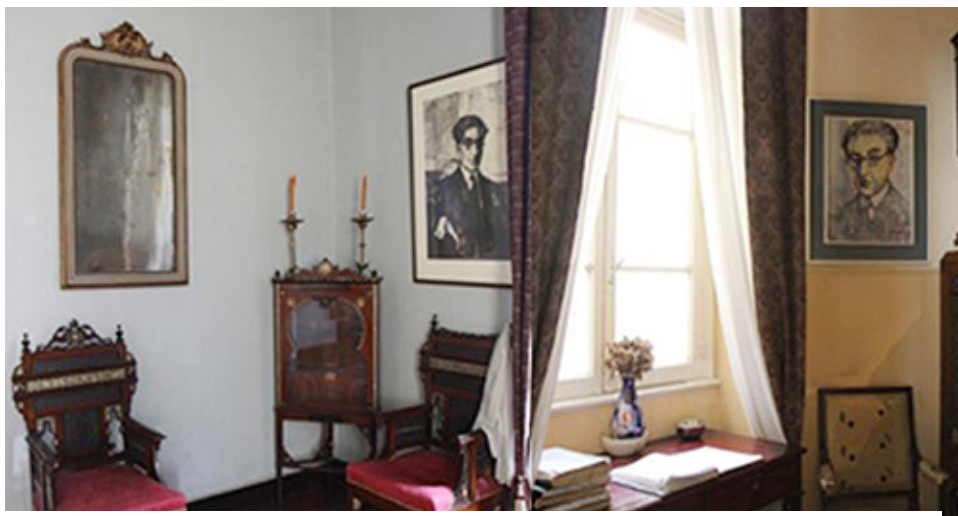


Figure 5.3 The Cavafy museum in Alexandria, 2012

The poems of Cavafy, the most influential of the Greek Alexandrian poets, as the above quote from the *koinotita*'s official website suggests, go even further towards reinforcing links to the Hellenistic period of Alexander the Great. As some critics have pointed out, in Cavafy's historical poems he turns away from the city he lives in and creates, instead, a Hellenistic city that flourished two millennia before his time (Keeley 1996; Fahmy 2006). Thus, poetry becomes the main vehicle connecting past and present.

Readers from around the world, but mainly Greeks from the mainland (*Elladites*), have identified the poet with the city of Alexandria and the flourishing Greek Alexandrian community of the 19th and 20th century. A few years ago, I conducted an interview with a 70-year-old Greek Alexandrian who was living in Athens. At the beginning of the interview, he started reading a historical poem by Cavafy as a response to one of my first questions. The fact that this ordinary man chose to read a poem instead of giving me a plain answer really impressed me, so I told another Alexandrian that it was my firm belief (the prevailing stereotype of the day) that all Alexandrians must have a deep knowledge of Cavafy's work. However, the man's reply was so blunt that it left me speechless, 'This is nonsense. They are just using Cavafy to show off. None of them even knew he existed three decades ago'.

After that conversation, I decided to look more deeply into this matter and I discovered that Cavafy was not only unknown to the majority of Greek Alexandrians until the late 1970s, but he was also held in disrepute of being a communist and homosexual. Most of the older interviewees told me that when they were younger had not been allowed to read his poems. But his international fame, his popularity among *the Elladites* from the late 1960s¹¹⁵ onwards, and the initiative taken by the Greek government to establish an annual cultural event, the 'Cavafeia'¹¹⁶ in the poet's birthplace, gradually made Cavafy beloved among Alexandrians as well.

Inaugurated in 1984, the 'Cavafeia' was the most important cultural event organized in the poet's honour; it was a joint initiative by the Greek Ministry of Culture and the Consul of Alexandria, Panagiotis Vlassopoulos. The event lasted a mere five years but in 1991 it was revived in the form of an international symposium that attracted participants from all over the world¹¹⁷. The cultural attaché of the Greek Embassy in Cairo, Kostandinos Moskof, was responsible for its revival. Moskof's goal was not only to open it up to foreigners already familiar with the poet's work, but also to encourage readership among the Egyptian people. It was during Moskof's tour of duty that Cavafy was translated into Arabic and thus made widely accessible to Egyptians.

In 1991, Moskof undertook another important initiative. He was the driving force behind the conversion of Cavafy's home in Alexandria into a museum (fig 5.3) dedicated to his life and work, which opened its doors in 1992¹¹⁸. This commemorative effort was taken a step further in 2010, when in a symbolic gesture, the street Sharm el-Sheik, where the poet's house is located, was renamed officially C. Cavafy Street by the Egyptian state (subsequent to the suggestion of then Mayor of Athens Nikitas Kaklamanis¹¹⁹). Today, Cavafy's House-Museum has become one of the city's most important landmarks; a major 'pilgrimage' destination for nostalgic Alexandrians, as well as for mainland Greeks, not to mention Europeans visitors. It has become what Nora calls a 'site of memory' (1989).

If commemorative events are primary ways of stimulating 'historical memory', the conversion of Cavafy's house into a museum may be seen as a typical example. Thus, through the process of 'institutionalization', the poet has become an integral part of the history of Alexandrian Greeks, incorporated into the official narrative of the community. His importance is demonstrated clearly by the regularity with which his name comes up in speeches given by Alexandrian Greek community officials at events in Greece and Egypt; by the space he is allotted on the website; by the number of articles written; and by photography or painting exhibitions in his honour which are, usually, organized by Greek institutions and held in Alexandria; as well as by his presence in all documentaries and reporting about the city.

Cavafy today is the key symbol of the community and the Greek state: a symbol with special significance, not only for the Greeks of Egypt and the mainland, but also for Egyptians and even the whole literary world.

1.2.3 The 'Great Benefactors'

The 'great benefactors', as the Alexandrians call them, are connected with the early modern history of Greeks in Alexandria, and as a consequence have

become local heroes whose works laid the foundations for the community's existence. These benefactors, as I have already mentioned, were wealthy Alexandrians (including Tositsas and Averof, who also served as community presidents), who donated large amounts of money to the community for the building of imposing complexes to serve the public¹²⁰.

But apart from the buildings themselves, which bear the names of their donors to remind the community of their public-spirited gifts, a number of marble portraits and statues were also placed in or outside almost every structure from the early days (late 19th - early 20th century). These statues along with the buildings themselves remain influential forms of social memory (fig 5.4). They constitute primary witnesses to the history of the past, because the memory of these benefactors' contributions is thus embedded in the development of the community.



Figure 5.4 Portrait bust of a Greek benefactor in the Koinotita offices, 2012

As my research revealed, the *Elliniko Tetragono* especially, where many of these buildings stand, was, from early on, the most important visible landmark of the community.

As can be seen from the official website of the *koinotita*, one thing that makes its

leaders proud today is the fact that its main goal has not changed since its foundation: to provide a well-organized system of social welfare to its members.¹²¹ The continuity of this aim along with efforts to preserve the landmark buildings with renovations, restorations etc., may also be interpreted as fulfilment of a duty they feel towards the great men of the past from whom they have inherited this 'significant' heritage and responsibility.

2. From memory to history: Ideological constructs

It can be assumed that, since the end of the 1980s, a process of intense commemoration of the past began with the erection of the two statues of Alexander the Great, the creation of new symbolic figures (Cavafy) and sites of memory (the poet's House-Museum), and the introduction of special events, such as the establishment of the Cavafeia festival.

These efforts were initiated in large part by *Egyptiotes* living on the mainland (many Alexandrians among them) and realized with considerable support from the Greek state through their official representatives in Greece and Egypt, as well as from the Greek *koinotita* of Alexandria. An Alexandrian, former member of the SAE, who had contacts with many senior officials and ministers of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, gave me his perspective on this subject:

'The history of Alexandria is in fashion in Greece and certainly the *Egyptiotes* who moved to Greece were the ones who "sold" the story¹²². Sometime during the 1980s, the Greek Egyptians decided to make their presence visible through the Greek media, in order to push forward their demands and find solutions to their problems (in Greece and in Egypt). This was when they rediscovered the history of their predecessors, benefactors and so forth. They pulled history out of the cupboard and sold it quite well. Before that, we didn't talk much about our history. We had forgotten our history. We didn't care to learn it ourselves, or to pass it on to future generations'.

Assmann (1995:128) argues that a community begins to focus on its history and

monumentalize its past, when it fears that memory is going to disappear, or is on the verge of disappearing; he calls this the institutionalization of memory. For my interviewee it was the nostalgic feelings created by time and distance that prompted the *Egyptiotes* of Greece to 'rediscover their history'. It was an effort to keep alive the living memories of those who witnessed and experienced the 'greatness' of the community before the 1960s. Moreover, as *Egyptiotes* grow older, the worry that these memories will get lost becomes even greater. But only through the process of monumentalization can memory be preserved and transferred to future generations; it is then that memory becomes history. As Nora (who clearly indicates the distinction between memory and history) states, memories are contained in a group, while history is the reconstruction of something which is no longer (1989:8).

But the *Egyptiotes*, in my informant's words, not only 'pulled out of the cupboard the history of their predecessors', they 'sold it quite well'. The most important element they had to present at the time was not Alexander the Great, who was already a known national symbol, but the Greek benefactors of Egypt. What made my informant state that 'they sold it quite well' was the way the Greek Alexandrians chose to use their more recent past for the purposes of the present (Collard 1989; Stewart 2016). They knew that in order to preserve their memory and solve their practical problems¹²³, they needed the support of the Greek state. By reminding Greek officials of the important role played by prominent Alexandrians in Greece itself, they managed to attract their interest and initiate a discourse about the importance of the community from where they originated (Soulogiannis, 2005: 317). What they initially focused on was not the work of the great benefactors in Egypt but their contributions to modern Greece. It is widely known today that some of the most important neo-classical buildings in Athens, which were erected for the public good, were made possible with donations from wealthy people who came from Egypt¹²⁴. The Greek state, on the other hand, seeing it would be beneficial to its own national interests, responded very positively to this effort, first by honouring Georgios Averof (founder of the Averofeio School in Alexandria and other institutions in Athens) as a national benefactor. For the official state, the Greek presence in Egypt, and in Alexandria

in particular, was incontrovertible proof of the success and historical importance of the Greek diaspora.

A series of events reflected the increased interest, which slowly started to manifest itself in the beginning of the 1980s. The establishment of the *Geniki Grammateia Apodimou Ellinismou* (General Secretariat of the Expatriate Greeks) in 1983 led Greek officials to be more involved with Greek affairs in Egypt and especially in Alexandria (Soulogiannis, 2005:317). After the early 1980s there was an increase in major cultural events held¹²⁵ in the community, the most important being the 'Cavafeia' festival in 1984 and the 100th anniversary celebrations at the Averofeio High School in 1985.

During the 1990s, documentaries and Greek television shows on the current history of the community were also beginning to be produced. The most important was the documentary film, *To Teleutaio Tetragono* (The Last Tetragono)¹²⁶ in 1991, which, for the first time, recorded the contemporary life of Alexandrian Greeks while emphasizing its past. In 1993, the 150th anniversary of the Greek *koinotita* in Alexandria was commemorated with splendid events at the *Elliniko Tetragono*. This has remained, according to Greek Alexandrian historian Soulogiannis, a milestone in the history of the community, which, as he mentions, 'had survived for all those years' (2005:321). In 1995, the World Council of Hellenes Abroad (SAE)¹²⁷ was established, while in 2006, the Alexandrian businessman and resident Stefanos Tamvakis, was elected president. This development along with the creation of a branch of the Council in Alexandria further enhanced the prestige of the Greek community and contributed to the dissemination of the history of Alexandrian Greeks to an even wider audience.

Halbwachs argues that historical memory is always reconstructed. In this kind of memory, the events are not remembered directly but through indirect stimulation: reading, listening or attending commemorative ceremonies in which people perform to refresh the common remembrance of a certain event or

person. In the case of Alexandria, it is the social institutions that preserve and interpret the past. Alexandrian Greeks, by taking part in commemorative activities with fellow members of their group, refresh memories of the past that would otherwise fade away (1992:24).

3. 'Our past is chasing us wherever we go'

Through the exhibition and other related activities, it became quite clear to me that the main preoccupation of the community leaders was not only how to hold onto this golden age, but also how to transmit it to the next generation (emerging and school), when so many factors are making this increasingly difficult. Indeed, the most common reaction of younger people to the ideal of the past can be summarized in this comment by one of my informants: 'I can't stand listening to stories about the past anymore. I'm fed up with hearing about it all the time . . . The past is chasing us wherever we go. It is attached to us like a sticker'.



Figure 5.5 The Kaniskereio building, 2012

Before I went to Alexandria, an older generation Alexandrian, who is among the community's most conservative members, had written a post on his blog '*Edo Alexandria*' (Here Alexandria) to express his opposition to the *koinotita* board's decision to lease the Kaniskerio retirement home to a French school (fig 5.5). His objection lay in his belief that passing a Greek building to the French school

would mean that it would be Egyptianized, since only Egyptian students will attend this school today. The expression he used was, 'We need to say "no" to the selling or leasing of our "Parthenons" in Alexandria'. By drawing a parallel between a *koinotita* building and the Parthenon, the ultimate symbol of Greek identity, he voiced the enormous importance that older Alexandrians place on their *koinotita* buildings. One is reminded that the Parthenon is a sacred monument of ancient Greece, admired for its 'architectural integrity' and always foremost in the official dominant narrative illustrating 'the Glory that was Greece', whose modern descendants represent its 'natural historical continuity'. This idea, adopted by many older Alexandrians, was intensely rejected by younger people, who seemed to feel there was no real danger of Egyptians taking over their buildings. 'They are just afraid that they will lose their Parthenons. The flag is waving on their masts, what more do we want?'

It was clear that the younger Alexandrians do not share the views of their elders concerning the past. Instead, the past appears to haunt many of them, and they accuse the leading members of the community of having adopted a backward-looking ideology. One of my informants expressed this perception as follows: 'The Greek community is very conservative. Its members are trapped inside a large fridge and live there as though they were frozen. They believe that they still live in the past; in the era of Salvagos and Benakis (well known benefactors), which they are trying to preserve, by any means'.

Moreover, the younger generation have sharply criticized the *koinotita* leaders for holding back the development and the future of the community. As one young person told me:

'The *koinotita* board members are old people who belong to the older generation and don't think about the future at all. They are stuck in their old views and, even if they want to change something because they have the power, they are afraid to do so because they want to avoid being criticized by other older members of the community. They are constantly revoking whatever promises or declarations they make'.

At one of the events I organized in order to start a discussion among all community members concerning its past, present and future, the younger people did not utter a word. They later told me that they don't know what to say when older people talk; they feel as if they are being silenced; they feel neglected and ignored. 'We didn't open our mouths because no one would listen to us, regardless of what we might talk about. . . they just grab the microphone and keep on blabbing, using their pompous language and you can't change their minds. If we talk, and speak our mind about how we see the future of our community, they will verbally attack us and we don't want to create a rupture in our relationship with them'.

What is interesting is that in spite of the fact that the emerging generation do express harsh criticism of the controlling generation regarding their handling of community affairs, they have never opposed their elders in public. Their opposition is usually passive, taking the form of a 'silent protest', such as when they refused to participate in the exhibition, because they viewed it as a project supported by the *koinotita* and representing its authority.

It is apparent that the leading members have an idealized image of the past that is essentially static, has no room for possibilities of change or progress and which inspires them to confront the progressive ideas of the younger members rather than to oppose history. Nevertheless, the view of one young Alexandrian was very telling. His statement, 'I would like to preserve my past but not in the same way as the older generation do', was shared by many of his peers. Moreover, the fact that the younger group reacted positively to the presentation of old community photographs in the exhibition because, as they said, they had never been shown photographs of the past before, reveals that although they may oppose the use of this particular narrative about the past, this does not necessarily mean they are opposed to the past itself, but rather to the way it is being articulated and used by community leaders.

An indication of this chasm, which is a product of the many changes that the community has undergone in recent years, may also be found in the way school

students react towards the community past. When students at the Averofeio School were asked if the past of the Greek community has a special meaning for them, most of them replied that it didn't really appeal to them, and that they hadn't heard stories about it from their family. Only one student said that the past of the community means a lot to him because he had heard many stories from his parents. He then pointed out that he was an 'authentic' Alexandrian, suggesting that his fellow students who are Egyptians or half Egyptians haven't been exposed to such narratives.

What transpires from the above comments and descriptions is that the identity of the older members, who still have memories of the old days, appears to be entangled in an effort to revive the glory of the past. It's as if embracing the past is inevitable and has the potential to turn into a stranglehold, since this fixation allows little room for flexibility and adaptability. What younger people are asking for is, first, the support of the *koinotita* so that all members can have the best quality of life possible and, second, to open up to Egyptian society and envisage a future that includes Egyptians. But, as we have said, this is highly unacceptable to the older people, who view opening to Egyptians as a threat to their identity. For them it is as if their future lies in the past, because it was in the past that everything looked as though it was heading towards the future, but then this future was suddenly lost.

4. Memory and Narrative in the context of the exhibition

While the official community discourse places great emphasis on the glory of the past (ancient and recent), basing its narrative on the eminence of Alexander the Great and the Greek benefactors and using Cavafy as a connecting link, the exhibition revealed that the Alexandrian members wanted to present an entirely different narrative.

Given the community's official mythologizing of Alexandria, going back to antiquity, it is very interesting to note its absence in the views of the majority of today's residents. Ordinary Greek Alexandrians seem rather indifferent to their

city's ancient past. They hardly mentioned it in their narratives, and only a few people had ever visited or were even aware of the existence of antiquities in the city. Its lack of significance to them was underscored by the fact that no one suggested that I include a photograph of the ancient city of Alexander the Great, or an archaeological site in the exhibition. The fact that there is so little interest in this period does raise a question. While I was organizing the exhibition an Alexandrian made the following proposal, 'Let's talk about today, about what we remember. Let's not go too far back into the past. Let's not get lost and repeat the same old stories'. What this quote implies is that for many Alexandrians the golden era is something much more tangible, something much more substantial and much more recent. That's the real history for them; this is what really matters, not Alexander the Great.

Concerning the recent past, although the decision to leave the benefactors out of the exhibition was mine¹²⁸, as it turned out, neither the community leaders nor members mentioned them. Moreover, not a single person asked me to include them in the exhibition. Even after the exhibition opened, no one thought of pointing out that an important part of their history was missing. However, considering the fact that the exhibition took place in a 100-year old building erected by one of the community's greatest benefactors, Emmanuel Benakis and his wife, whose portraits figure prominently at the entrance, it's reasonable to assume that there was no further need to accentuate this aspect of modern history. The public didn't need additional reminders, as they enter these buildings on a daily basis and so experience their history.

The same can be said about Cavafy who did not have a special place in the exhibition¹²⁹. What is interesting is that although I entered the exhibition space some hundred times in the course of setting it up, only on my last visit to Alexandria (three years later) did I notice that the space where the exhibition was held bore a copper plaque at the entrance proclaiming it 'Constantinos Cavafy's Hall'.



Figure 5.6. Carnival party at the Davarakis house, 1948 (by Ritas)

When I asked an Alexandrian in his 50s who works for the *koinotita* how he learnt about the official history of the Greeks of Alexandria, he looked puzzled at first and then replied that no one had ever taught him anything about it, and that neither he nor his friends had been interested in the remote past, which they had picked up on their own much later: ‘We only knew what we heard from our parents and grandparents, that they had a good quality of life, that the city was beautiful, that it had a lot of Greeks, that they used to throw nice parties and balls, that they took trips to the seaside, things like that’. What my interviewee was inferring is that what really mattered for most Alexandrians was not the dominant narrative of the community, but their own everyday stories.

The significance that has been given to these stories is apparent in the large number of photographs collected for the exhibition which show not only images of people’s early life and school years, but also snapshots of fun activities and excursions from the 1950s to the 1970s. Such photographs illustrate in the best possible way the prosperity of an era, which at that time still retained the characteristics of a ‘golden age’ (fig 5.6 and 5.7).

What seems to be apparent is that for ordinary residents the emphasis is on families and generations, on living memory. Assmann, argues that 'communicative memory. . . is not supported by any institutions of learning, transmission, and interpretation; . . . it lives in everyday interaction and communication and, for this reason, has only a limited time depth which normally reaches no further back than eighty years, the time span of three interacting generations' (2008:111). Therefore, the past that seems to be meaningful for Alexandrians is not the institutionalized past provided by the leading members of the community; it is not the 'golden era' of their great ancestors, but rather the golden age of their youth, the childhood of their parents and grandparents. This past is tangible as they have personal photos, which portray this era, which remind them, which tell them stories, which embody those memories.

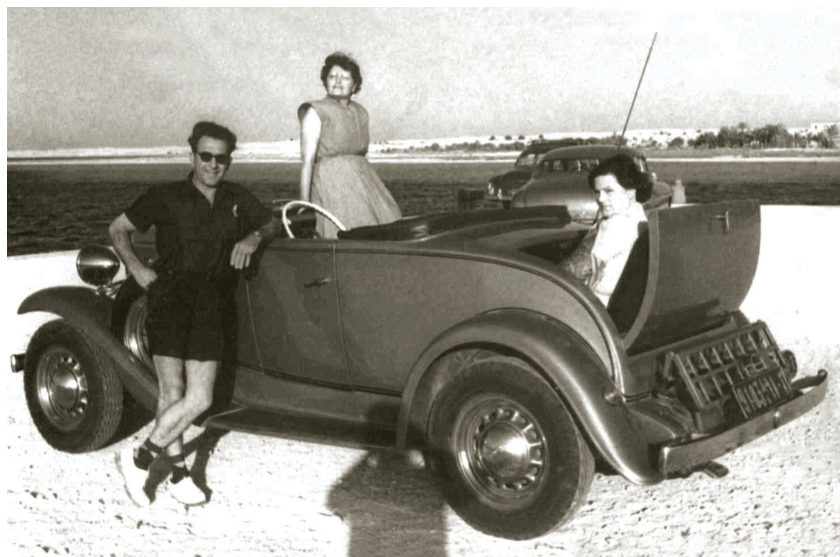


Figure 5.7 Alexandrian friends in Lake Mareotis (unknown date)

What was striking, though, was the fact that not even the leading members of the community showed any interest in incorporating either ancient or more recent prominent figures in the exhibition, despite their emphasis on them in the official community history. They neither asked me to include them, nor did they query their exclusion. Their lack of reaction raises an important question, which can be answered by considering the exhibition in terms of its addressivity. To whom was this exhibition addressed? Kratz (2002), in her work on the Okiek portraits, used the physical changes in the exhibition display (Kenya, USA), and the

different audiences who viewed it, as a starting point to explore how visitors engage with exhibits in varying ways, depending on what they bring to the museum experience. In the case of the Greek Alexandrian exhibition, as shown in a previous chapter, the exhibition was prepared in collaboration with the community for an audience consisting almost exclusively of its own members. Would their decisions concerning its content have been the same if the exhibition was destined to be shown in Greece, to a Greek public? Moreover, would the Greek audience receive it in the same way if it were presented without any changes or additions?

4.1 Narrative silences

The relationship between remembering and forgetting has been at the centre of many debates over the work of memory (Eyerman 2001; Auge 2004; Argenti and Schramm 2010). Connerton (2008) stated that memory, partially and necessarily consists of forgetting (or selective forgetting), which he sees as another aspect of memory. He also argues that there are intentional and imposed silences, while there are also silences that originate in deeply shocking and painful experiences, such as Nasser's revolution, which had a traumatic effect on the Greek Alexandrians whether they left or stayed. Connerton calls them 'narrative silences', since they signify the refusal or inability to recount certain narratives (2008).

Nasser's regime was never mentioned in any narratives, unless I myself asked my interviewees to comment. Nevertheless, the virtual silencing of the events of this period, in combination with the total lack of references to it in the photographs I was given, led me to the decision to omit this part of history, which was so critical for the community. I should point out, though, that, even I seemed to have internalized this silence as an insider; I only realized that I had left out the Nasser era after the exhibition was over.

It is widely known that Nasser's revolution and the events that followed made life in Egypt very precarious for the Greeks. In history books written by Greek

Egyptiotes, this period is referred to as the one that changed the course of the Greek communities in the country and led to their decline. But in the public discourse of the community (official and unofficial), this period is almost never mentioned. There is no reference to it on the community website or the official speeches, or in the everyday stories told by Greek Alexandrians. And on the rare occasions when it does come up, the theme is invariably how much suffering occurred under Nasser's authoritarian regime.

The position of Alexandrians belonging to the two older generations regarding the second Egyptian revolution of 2011 was immediately obvious from the way they reacted to photographs of it, which I used in my photo elicitation method during the interviews. Not only did they quickly flip through the photographs without looking at them, but they would almost throw them at the table, visibly upset that I had included them with older and more recent depictions of the community. Moreover, their negative reaction to the *Al Jazeera* documentary film (see chapter four p. 132.), showed that for most of them the stressful and insecure post-revolution period of 2011 might have been experienced as a repetition of the traumatic period during Nasser's rule, when most Greeks left Egypt. This phenomenon is labelled by Knight (2015), who relates the feelings of hunger during the current economic crisis in Greece to the famine endured 70 years earlier during the German occupation, as 'cultural proximity' - a historical intimacy established by affective connection to a past.

What is striking, though, is that several of the Greeks who left Alexandria during the 1960s (whom I had interviewed during previous research in Athens) felt sympathy towards Nasser and his revolution, even in cases where they had lost all their property. But when I asked a current resident to comment on this attitude, he became annoyed and said, 'You should have asked them when they left. Because they were absent, they didn't have the chance to see the damage that his regime caused in Egypt. And because they settled down quickly into their new lives in Greece, they forgot about all those events and now they feel nostalgic. We who stayed, on the contrary, had to face the consequences'. His

opinion, which was shared by three other people who were listening to our conversation (all business men), clearly illustrates the limitations of nostalgia.

My interviewee's implications of the greater courage needed from those who stayed compared with those who left, takes us back to the beginning of this chapter. The emphasis on heroism, which is evident in the selective use of Cavafy's poems by Alexandrian residents, may also be seen as an attempt to justify their decision back then: someone had to stay and protect their property, their past, their identity, although the good old days would never come again. Only a few stayed behind, the last ones, to make their heroic sacrifice.

CHAPTER SIX

The socio-spatial relations of the Greek community in Alexandria

‘Eirini, with her rich material, succeeded in presenting both our space – our Alexandria – and our sense of measuring time – the then and now’.

This quote is taken from the introductory speech by the president of the Greek *koinotita* at the opening of the exhibition. Referring to its title, ‘Travelling in the Then and Now . . .’ (the Greek version), the president drew attention to the exhibition’s success in presenting space and time, even if space was not mentioned in the title.

What exactly is this ‘space’ that the president mentioned as the focal point of this exhibition? One would expect him to refer to the spatial boundaries of the Greek community in Alexandria in the past and present, given that the exhibition was centred on its history and revived the good old days visually. But, on the contrary, he declared that ‘this is an exhibition that presents Alexandria, and more specifically “our” Alexandria’, thus claiming ownership of the city space in terms of social interaction and cultural identity, its ‘Greekness’.

But how are those claims of ownership (ideological vs practical) created, given that Alexandria today is a megalopolis of approximately 8 million people and even if there was, and still is, a Greek part in it, we can definitely not talk about the city as a whole. What does ‘our Alexandria’ suggest? I would argue that the possessive ‘our’, which the president used, refers in part to the city’s ‘ancient Greek roots’, and to the considerable Greek presence during the 19th and 20th centuries. I would also argue that his words reflect the way space is conceived from the point of view of its Greek residents today (at least the older generations).

This chapter will therefore try to explore the spatial boundaries, both real and imagined, of the Greek community, and focus on the different ways in which

Greeks have experienced the city spatially. Drawing on the relevant theory and ethnographic data, I will attempt to discuss how local notions of identity, memory and social communication were affected by the radical changes in the social, economic, political and urban environment. I will also examine the dimension of time in an effort to show how temporalities coexist in space (its past and present).

I will first try to define the Greek community in space and time by presenting the geographical area of the Greek community. I will explore the historical emergence and evolution of different spaces in the city – the public buildings and open areas in which Alexandrian Greeks live, create memories, encode their identity, give meanings through time and define ideological and material borders. I will also look at how socio-political ideologies and economic forces were involved in both their production and cultural construction, and at the parameters that influenced their planning and architectural design. Then I will attempt to identify the typology of space in terms of scale, use and form: community/personal, private/public, open/closed, old/new. To this end, I will follow the spatial development of ‘Greek places’ in the city of Alexandria during different time periods: the pre-revolutionary era (before the 1960s), when Europeans, Greeks among them, built the city, and in the post-revolutionary era (after the 1960s), when changes reflected Egyptian national pride and the social ideology of the new political power. Furthermore, I will consider spatial practices and ideologies in relation to how these were conceptualized, expressed and visualized by different generations of Alexandrian Greeks, along with the discontinuities in practices, narratives and imaginings of the city.

1. Alexandria: The city’s formation in a historical perspective

‘When I was a child in the early 1960s, my father used to take me on walks in the streets of Alexandria. He loved the history of the city and he used to tell me stories about the ancient city, about Alexander the Great, Greek Alexandrian philosophers, and also its recent past. He showed me around Greek shops, Greek neighbourhoods, pointing out Greek buildings, Greek names in the streets . . . As

a child I got confused and I came to believe that Alexandria was Greek. How can you define a place where everything is Greek?’



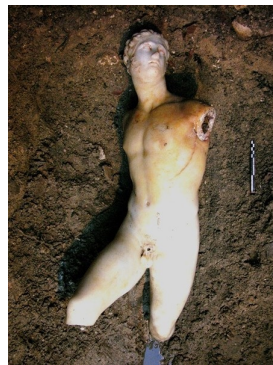
Figure 6.1 An old street sign in Alexandria with the name 'Rue l' Eglise Grec'

This story told by a man in his early 60s is a vivid illustration of the way in which landscape is often regarded as the materialization of memory, the fixing of social and individual histories in space. Richardson examines the spatial concepts underlying movement and argues that walking can be a means of sensing history (fig 6.1). 'During walks, history is encountered in buildings, objects, ruins, monuments, stories, or other traces of the past in the urban landscape' (2005:15). For the father of my interviewee, history meant the Greek traces in the city; both the ancient (Hellenistic) and the recent (19th and 20th centuries). While walking in the streets with his son, he recalled memories of different times, constructing a narrative that linked the past with the present.

As mentioned in a previous chapter, the official narrative of the community's leading members traces the Greek presence in the city back to ancient times, and its foundation by Alexander the Great in 331 BC, which was called Alexandria ¹³⁰. Alexandria became the intellectual and cultural centre of the ancient world (especially during the Hellenistic and Roman period) until the Muslim conquest of Egypt in AD 641, when a new capital was founded at Fustat (later absorbed into Cairo). Alexandria today offers an extraordinary example of stratification, given its long history¹³¹. In the last two decades, Greeks from Alexandria and the

mainland, proud of a city which is considered to be one of the glories of Greek national history, have undertaken several archaeological excavations in search of its past¹³², as the modern city is believed to have been built over the ancient remains¹³³ (fig 6.2 and 6.3).

Kitroeff, who studied the Greek Alexandrian community, argues that for most Alexandrian Greeks, history means their city's Hellenistic past. For him, the fact that the modern city lies on the site of the city founded by Alexander the Great, and possesses many monuments from that period as a daily reminder of the city's ancient heritage, was an important factor in the preservation of the myth of continuity of the Greeks from antiquity on (1983: 18-19).



Figures 6.2. and 6.3. A Greek archaeologist who runs the excavations in Alexandria. Despite scholarly objections, she is convinced that the statue she found represents Alexander the Great.

However, with regard to the exhibition and the photographs collected, the Alexandria which is invoked by the majority of Greeks and portrayed through the exhibition is not the ancient city but that of the 19th to mid 20th century, a place settled by their ancestors, who created their own built environment and social spaces. This image of the city is something they can more easily relate to.

1.1 The development of the modern multi-cultural city (19th-mid 20th century)

It was in the early 19th century that Egypt began to attract large numbers of foreigners. They were attracted by economic prospects and were encouraged by Mohammed Ali, pasha of Egypt (1810-1849), who managed to spatially develop and expand the city. Realizing what the west had to offer, he and his descendants

(the dynasty that ended with Farouk) modernized the country, looking to Europe for inspiration, technology and markets.

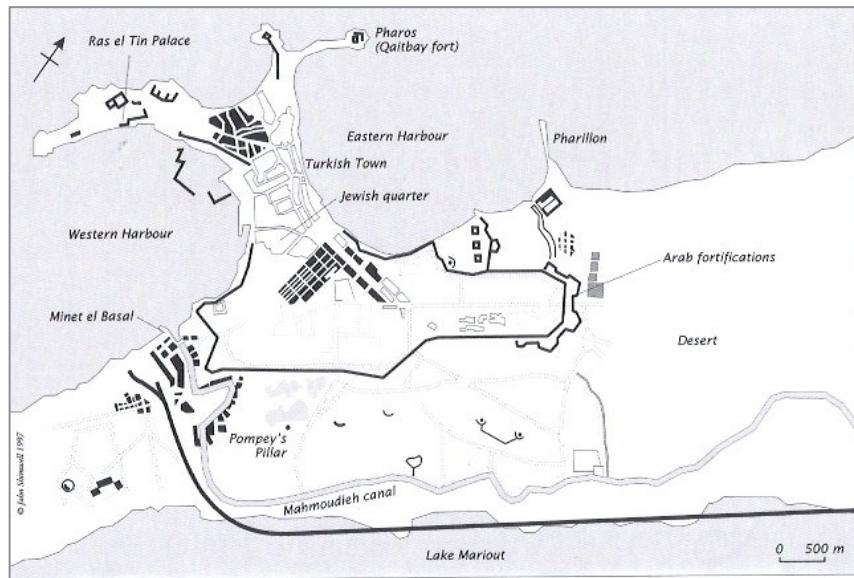


Figure 6.4 Map of Alexandria, 1856 (in Ilbert and Yannakakis 1997:196)

The foreigners began arriving in Alexandria after 1815. Their dynamic presence quickly transformed the small Ottoman town of a few thousand inhabitants into a prosperous westernized urban centre. The areas of *Ras el Tin*, *Bahari*, *Sayala* and *Anfoushi* formed the 17th-century Ottoman quarter, where the Turkish and Egyptian population lived, which the foreigners called the 'Turkish Town' (fig 6.4)

With the growing demand for Egyptian cotton and the construction of the Suez Canal (1859-1869), Alexandria became more and more important as a port and business centre. Meanwhile, Egypt had itself become too strategic to be left to its own devices and the British found a pretext for intervening in 1882 to safeguard their trading interests. This conferred stability on the country, and the European population continued to grow, especially in Alexandria. By 1927 Alexandria had evolved into a sizable town of over 600,000 inhabitants¹³⁴, enjoying the status of the second largest city in Egypt and one of the Mediterranean's most important ports.

As the city and its population grew, Alexandria expanded eastwards, into what was called the 'new European town', which from the beginning was distinct from the old indigenous town. The Alexandria of the 19th century was indeed established as a new European city where everything had been planned and built with no reference to the Ottoman Empire to which Egypt belonged. Urban planning between 1830 and 1860 copied the layout of contemporary European cities, in particular those in Northern Italy, while the European-style architecture of Alexandria played an important role in shaping the emerging 'multi-cultural' identity of the city.



Figure 6.5 General view of the *Corniche* (unknown date)

In Low's (1999) view, the planning, design and construction of a city are processes of social production responsible for shaping the urban environment. Thus, the building, architectural and political decision-making elite (mainly British, French and Italian) created a particular identity, which established and reinforced its own position. The city came to be regarded by its inhabitants and visitors as part of Europe on Egyptian territory. Its gardens, hotels, electric transport, cinemas and theatres were European in style, yet it was also a seaside resort with sandy beaches and cabins.

The new multi-cultural community took over the space of the city centre and adapted it to reflect their ethnic/national/religious identities (Baumann 1999). To fulfil the demands of their clients, architects incorporated in their designs historic revivalist trends of neo-Classicism, neo-Gothic, neo-Renaissance, neo-Pharaonic and neo-Mamluk architectural styles, on the one hand, and on the other, innovative types of buildings, such as garden villas and elitist mansions in area of *Ramleh* (the stretch of sand that extends to the east of Alexandria). At the same time, the 'European town' remained the commercial and financial heart of the city.



Figure 6.6 View of an Alexandrian street (early 20th century)

The import of city planning ideas from France to Alexandria, which started with Mohammed Ali, continued with his descendants, who were fascinated by the glamorous and extravagant life of Nice and Cannes. They too, therefore, contributed to the modernization of Alexandria by building a *corniche* (coastal road) along the Eastern Harbour in the hope of imitating the elegance of the French Riviera (fig 6.5). This urban feature, which was imposed on the city's fabric, became part of the city's culture and a focal point for the city's activities and social life, attracting not only the wealthy but also people from all economic classes (Saad, 2005:190-91). The *corniche* became the very emblem of the city. Alexandria was built to resemble Nice.

Even though the Greeks had not participated in the planning of the city as powerful decision makers, they nevertheless did exert an influence on the city's history, architecture and infrastructure. The architect Colonas points out that the Greeks played an important part in shaping the landscape of the city by erecting private and public buildings that stand out for their architectural significance. The majority of the buildings adopted the 'neo-classical style', as a means of showing their ideological connection to Athens. In this way, they succeeded in differentiating themselves from the other foreign communities in Alexandria who adopted a more 'European-style' architecture. A number of wealthy Greek Alexandrians funded the construction of major public buildings, as part of the city's urban and multi-ethnic development scheme¹³⁵.

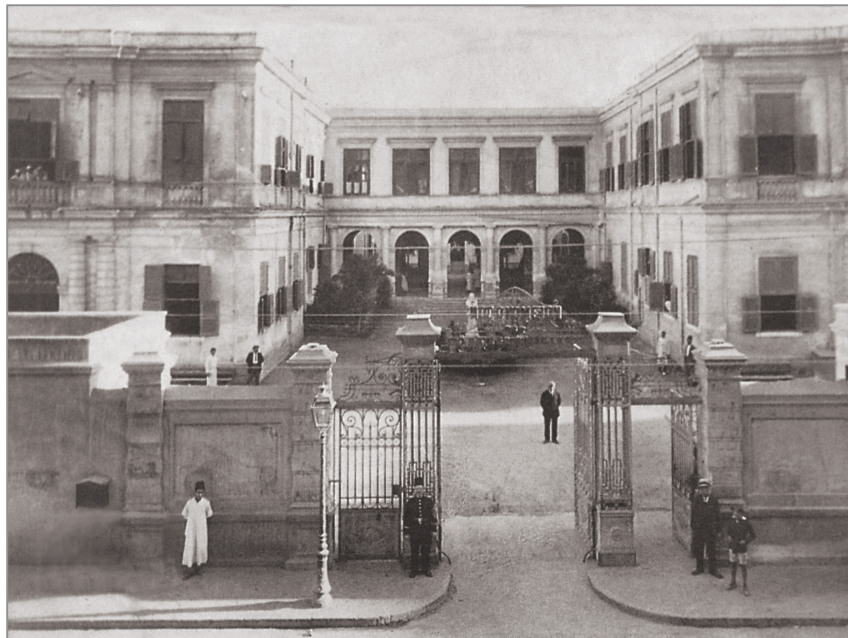


Figure 6.7 The old Greek hospital (ELIA)

The presence of Greek architects, who resided in Alexandria and actively participated in architectural competitions sponsored by the municipality of Alexandria, winning prizes for their drawings of the facades of important constructions, left its mark in the city¹³⁶ (Colonas, 2000: 130).

But Greeks, like every diaspora group which settles in a pre-existing urban environment that is new for them, applied their own social organization within a well-defined framework, creating their own spatial boundaries in order to preserve their cultural identity (language, religion, social stratification, value system, uses of space and so on).



Figure 6.8 The former home to Antoniadeio Elders' House (ELIA)

Their presence in the city made itself felt not through the erection of public buildings, but mainly through the buildings used by their own community (fig 6.7 and 6.8). Designed for the most part in the neo-classical style, their sole purpose was to cater to the needs of Greek community members. After enough Greeks settled in Alexandria to form a *koinotita*, the Egyptian state offered it a substantial area of land in the city centre where they were permitted to erect their own buildings. While the Greeks were developing their community in the 19th and 20th century, many benefactors donated large amounts of money for the construction of a series of large community institutions with different functions. At the beginning of the 20th century in Alexandria, there were many schools (communal and private), churches, welfare institutions, many associations and club houses, hospitals, and a cemetery. Even though most of the buildings were in the city centre, many of them had also been erected in the suburbs of *Ibrahimia*, *Ramleh* and so on, to meet the needs of the thousands of Greeks who resided there (fig 6.9).

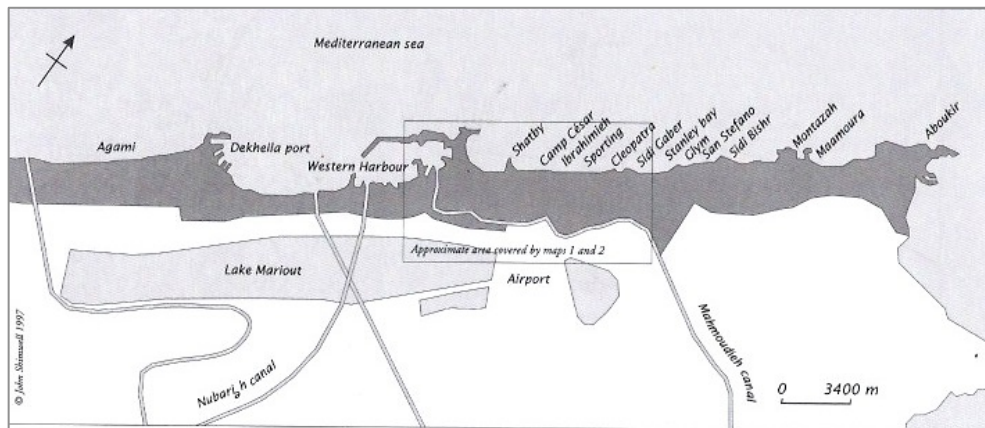


Figure 6.9 Alexandria and its suburbs. Source: Ilbert and Yannakakis, 1997:198

What made the Greek presence in Alexandria so distinct was its large size; the community was the largest in the city and its members were dispersed in many different parts of the town. Greeks had the tendency to group together in certain residential areas. Poor families lived in the area of *Attarin* and the Arab quarters alongside poor Levantine, Italians and Egyptians. In *Ramleh*¹³⁷, a series of outskirts east of Alexandria, the concentration of Greeks was exceptionally high, and thus they developed an organized *koinotita* there. The suburb of *Ibrahimia* had the most compact Greek population and was often described by visiting mariners as the *Nea Kokkinia* (named after an area settled by Asia Minor refugees in Athens). A *koinotita* was also founded in this area in 1904 and it gradually became a populous suburb with thousands of inhabitants. Another residential area on the western edge of the city, which developed its own *koinotita*, was *Aboukir*¹³⁸. *Quartier Grecque* was one of the most beautiful residential districts with many private villas and gardens. This is where the wealthy Greeks lived at the turn of the 20th century, and the streets are still named after the Ptolemaic, Pharaonic, Abbasid and Fatimid rulers. Finally, the suburb of *Chatby*, in central Alexandria, is an area where a large number of Greeks lived, especially in the part closest to the sea¹³⁹.

Today the houses of the few Greeks who reside in Alexandria are scattered in the same areas where they used to live in the past, closer to the centre. The reason for this is that, surprisingly, Greeks never really owned houses. Only the wealthy

owned villas or entire buildings, which have now either been demolished or sold to Egyptians. The majority of Greeks would pay rent, but owing to the favourable rent control system, which applied to everyone (tenants had the right to inherit) and the extremely low rates (an average of 10 euros per month for 200 square metres), Greeks would rarely move or relocate. This meant that they considered their rented houses permanent residences¹⁴⁰. The only area which has attracted Greeks today (mainly the neo-Alexandrians and a very few young Alexandrian couples) is the *Quartier Grecque*, which was traditionally a Greek neighbourhood, and still is wealthy, quiet, safe and close to the city centre and the Greek institutions.



Figure 6.10 The Good Friday *Epitaphios* procession in the streets of Alexandria, 1959 (Trechantzakis collection)

Thanks to their dominant presence in the city before the 1960s, Greek Alexandrians used and experienced many different spaces of the city (public and communal) on a daily basis. However, an indication of the community's present inward-looking character is the fact that, with regard to the exhibition and the representation of space, the majority of photographs from the pre-Nasser era (but also from more recent periods) represented social events in communal spaces. This can be partially explained by the large institutional presence of the

Greeks in the past and the hundreds of associations around which they were organized. However, quite often (as shown in some photographs), community events crossed the community borders and were celebrated in public areas such as the streets of Alexandria. What is interesting about these photographs is that they depict religious ceremonies in which all members of the community participated; for instance, the procession of the *Epitaph* of Christ on Good Friday (fig 6.10). This was the largest *Epitaph* procession in the city (each church had one). It is said that on every Good Friday the roads of the whole area around the church would be closed to traffic and chairs would be put along the sides of the street so that people could sit and watch the procession. Two more photographs depict public religious ceremonies. The first shows high-school students from the Greek community who have flocked to Mohammed Ali square in the city centre to watch the funeral procession of the Greek benefactor Georgios Averof, in 1888 (fig 6.11), while the second also shows the funeral procession of someone whose identity is not recorded (fig 6.12)



Figure 6.11 High school boys at Mohamed Ali square, 1899 (ELIA)

Generally the city's public spaces were depicted on postcards showing clean, empty streets and beautiful buildings. But those were professional – commercial photographs, which I did not include in the exhibition. The only photograph of a public space I used was one I selected from the collection of Topis, a professional

photographer. It showed *Ramleh* station with its surrounding buildings and the seaside, and actually was the first to greet the visitors. I chose it because it depicted the old city centre.



Figure 6.12 Funeral procession of a prominent person in Alexandria
(Saatsoglou collection)

1.2 The new transformed city (from the 1960s to the present day)

From the mid 1960s, after the Suez crisis (1956) foreign populations started leaving the city. Modernization followed and with it a population boom, as Egyptian rural migrants started swarming in. The city's demography changed dramatically, and old buildings belonging to departed inhabitants were either destroyed or transformed into consulates, state-owned banks or institutions. Some neighbourhoods retained their character, while others altered beyond recognition, and many new settlements (grey, international-style condominiums) began to appear in the rural landscape. In the past few decades especially, the city of Alexandria has expanded dramatically and consequently suffered from severe problems such as overloaded infrastructure, pollution, environmental degradation, and haphazard planning (Aref 2005:250).

Today, in the collective imagination of most Alexandrian Greeks, two Alexandrias exist: the old city in the urban centre and the contemporary, located in the

suburbs. The old city can be traced in the streets and buildings, but also in the memory of those who experienced it, regardless of whether they left or stayed. But even though the old city still exists, many changes have taken place; European and Greek names of old shops, tram stations, streets and squares have been replaced by Egyptian names; the once white and shiny facades of the 'European-style' buildings, which always stood out on the old photographs of Alexandria, are now dingy from years of smog.

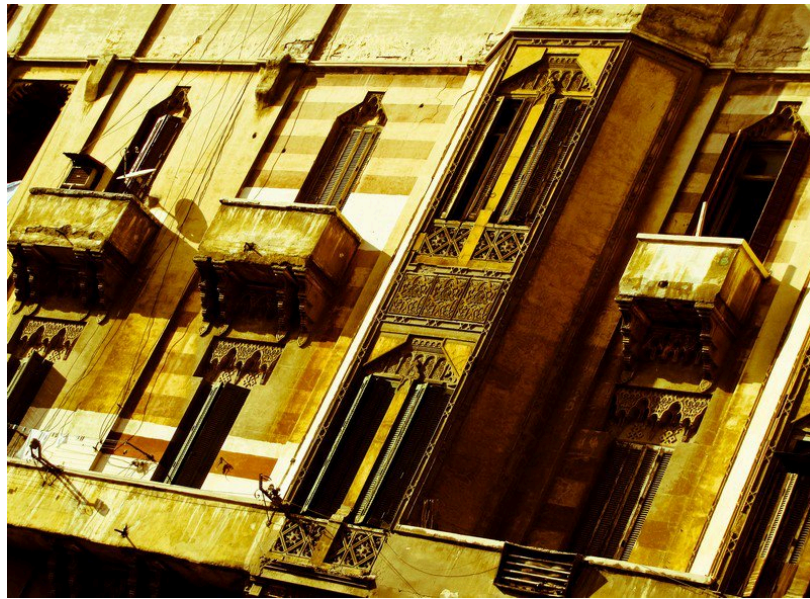


Figure 6.13 An old building owned by a Greek, 2012

Although it remains the historical, cultural, civic and religious core of Alexandria, the centre¹⁴¹ is undergoing drastic changes since it lost its role as the city's main hub. Aref (2005) states that this area, which once 'belonged' to the elite is now a place for the 'masses'. It used to have a considerable number of prominent, early 20th-century apartment buildings, but the rapid shift of population to the centre in the 1960s and 1970s, combined with the concentration of activities, resulted in the conversion of many of these apartments into clinics, offices for small businesses and other commercial uses. The typology of shoppers, sellers and merchandise has also changed, since the European-style shops have been replaced by Egyptian-style storefronts and street vendors (Aref 2005: 252-56).

Today, as older Greek Alexandrians move around the city centre, they still find themselves surrounded by vestiges of what they call 'the city's Greekness'; hundreds of old Greek shop signs, Greek names in the streets (Deinokratis, Herodotus), and others. And although the myth of ancient Alexandria is still powerful and evocative, what really strikes them is another kind of aura inspired not so much by the ancient myths, but by the 'uncannily' present fragments of the old city in the now transformed Alexandrian cityscape (fig 6.13). A decaying building or a broken shutter are fragments of the past that strike their senses and 'revive in their imagination all their former life and all the associated images with which it is connected'. As DeLyser has argued, often absences in the landscape can speak to much more and 'reward' the visitors (2001:27).

Over the last two decades, in parallel with the continuous expansion of the city to provide housing for its ever increasing population, many business have been relocated from the city centre to newly developed suburbs and other districts, which form what is known today as contemporary Alexandria. Owing to changes in the socioeconomic characteristics beginning in the mid 1990s, Egypt has followed European trends and started to adopt a westernized model of living. Shiny supermarkets and mega-malls have introduced new shopping patterns and isolated shopping and entertainment spaces have started to appear (Aref, 2005) far from the city centre and beyond the public transportation networks. The most famous such areas are Carrefour and San Stefano, which took their names from the well-known supermarket and the mall.

2. Experiencing the contemporary city: The use of public spaces

In the light of the major transformations described above, the small group of remaining Greeks have had to adjust to the new reality. The radical changes in the urban environment have affected not only their physical, but also their living spaces. Aiming to get closer to the lived and embodied experience of Greek Alexandrians today, I tried to implement 'walking tours' with my participants as part of my research methodology. My intention was to compare the different routes they take so as to understand the various forms of attachment to and

experience of place, as perceived by different groups of people, and eventually get some insight into the diversity of reactions to the transformed city (fig 6.14).



Figure 6.15 Current view of Alexandria

After a while and having managed only one walking interview, I realized that this was not an appropriate research technique, as Greek Alexandrians did not see the streets of Alexandria as suitable places to walk and rarely use them as pedestrians. I myself remember being told to avoid street life. Unable to use my intended method, I decided to focus my questions around the reasons why they were so opposed to walking in the streets. Alexandrians attributed their reluctance to several factors. The most common was the conviction that walking is dangerous, partly because of the deteriorating quality of the architecture and infrastructure. As one well-educated man in his 40s told me, 'The city is growing old. You can feel it. Many buildings are dilapidated and there is always the danger that some piece of a building may fall down and kill you. An Egyptian was killed a month ago when an old balcony collapsed'.

Another common reason cited was that cars can be lethal since the Egyptians are such crazy drivers, while almost all the Greek women said they were bothered by harassment from Egyptian men and the fact that they are not free to dress the way they want.

Noise and smell are also good reasons for avoiding public spaces (fig 6.15 and 6.16). Edward Hall, who studied space as a system of communication, argues that spatial experience is not only visual but also multisensory (1969:pp x-xi). Most Greek Alexandrians I interviewed found the city 'very dirty, smelly and noisy'. As one of my interviewees noted, 'I always use my car in Alexandria and always with the windows closed just not to have any connection with what is happening around me, and especially to avoid the bad smells and noise'.



Figure 6.16 Current view of Alexandria

Many authors stress the centrality of memory in relation to the senses and argue that the senses can act as a mnemonic device (Seremetakis 1994, Sutton 2001, Rhys-Taylor 2017etc). The association between smell and memories of Alexandria is very common among nostalgic writers, who vividly conjure up the essence of the city they had lost. Haag for example (2004) writes that every Alexandrian could recognize the perfume of the city. One of my interviewees, a Greek Alexandrian woman who lives in Athens but happened to be in Alexandria during my fieldwork, sent me a letter some time after our meeting, just to give me some more information regarding the 'unique' smell of Alexandria. She wrote that this smell derives from the 'combination of the salty sea air and the perfume coming from the Mariotis Lake', which lies in the southern part of the city. Contrary to the lyrical nostalgia of this woman, my previous interviewee, who was a resident of today's Alexandria, referred to an unpleasant odour. In his

view, noise and smell, which are considered to be basic features of Egyptian life, define the city's public spaces, which they have to share with Egyptians. For him, moving around the city in the safety and privacy of a car is a good way to avoid the bustle of street life and consequently any connection with the outside world, which is an Egyptian world.

After Nasser's revolution, Greeks felt they were being expelled from the public areas of the city as Egyptians took over their space. As one Greek Alexandrian said, 'Nowadays the pavements are full of Egyptians and there is not enough room for us to walk'. The small remaining group of Greeks in Alexandria, having to adjust to the new reality, avoid mingling with the newly arrived Egyptian population, who were perceived as changing the face of Alexandria since, according to one of my informants, 'they were lower-income migrant from rural areas'. Because of these changes, the Greek inhabitants gradually started to abandon the public spaces they had occupied for generations and street life dwindled accordingly¹⁴². The *corniche* itself has different users now but has remained popular among the new inhabitants of Alexandria, being a public space with pleasant scenery open to the sea. The public areas Greeks visit today are mainly westernized places such as malls, hotels, modern cafés and restaurants, or private Egyptian clubs, which because of their high fees are accessible only to middle- and upper-class Egyptians.

The feeling of 'city loss' is particularly strong among the two older generations of Alexandrian Greeks. The younger generations, although they make selective use of public spaces, do not share this feeling, because they have no memories of the 'old city'. However, for the emerging generation, as shown in the mental maps¹⁴³ I had them draw, it was the pre-Nasser part of Alexandria (the old city) that was included and made meaningful. Discussing their maps, they revealed that they don't like to visit the suburbs, because they don't consider them part of 'Alexandria'. The main reason they gave was that there is no history connected with the new districts. This comment takes us back to the beginning of the chapter and the man who remembers his father walking him through the city and its history. What the maps clearly indicated was that there are important

continuities, as well as differences, between the younger and older generations at least in regards to the city as a product of history.

2.1 City loss here and there: Memories, nostalgia and empirical living

The feelings of anxiety and sadness my interviewees expressed about the predominance of Egyptians in the city is not restricted to Greeks. Fahmy (2012) states that in the western imagination, Alexandria has always been associated with loss. While the fame of Alexandrian cosmopolitanism owes a lot to its three literary legends, Cavafy, Forster and Durrell, the themes of 'the fallen city', of loss and of exile, as demonstrated by Mabro (2006), have been perpetuated in numerous semi-autobiographical novels by people of different origins (Greeks among them), who once lived in Alexandria. These memoirs about lost childhood and adolescence have been instrumental in fabricating the western image of Alexandria as 'the city of loss'¹⁴⁴.

Ntalachanis in his analyses observes that Cavafy's lines, 'say goodbye to her, to the Alexandria you are losing', which Alexandrians in Greece refer to often in their official and unofficial narratives, one can detect a lyricism and nostalgia about the lost glory of the past (2015: 359-360). But who is responsible for this loss? According to Fahmy, 'Arabs have always been associated with what is considered to be the city's loss' (2012: 65). Dealing with the presence of Arabs in the discourse on cosmopolitan Alexandria, the writer identifies a number of curious moments of silence that all but erase the very long and vibrant presence of these Arabs in the city and attempts to analyse the manner in which Arabs have been left out.

The first mass appearance of Arabs in modern Alexandria is usually taken to be after Nasser's takeover, and many of those who have written about the end of cosmopolitan Alexandria blame him and his 'puritanical socialist revolution' for destroying the city. Thus, when they introduced the Egyptians into their narratives about the city, it was either to highlight their feeling that they do not really belong here, or to stress that the responsibility for the city's final demise

falls squarely on Egyptian shoulders, and theirs alone (Fahmy 2012). I would qualify this statement by pointing out that the city Europeans refer to as the 'lost city' is a 'cosmopolitan one', while the city the Greeks are talking about is primarily a 'Greek city'. This distinction was apparent in a discussion I had with a 70-year-old woman in Alexandria. While talking about memories, I told her that when I went to London for my studies I took with me a bottle of sand from my favourite beach in Alexandria as a reminder of my place of birth. She looked at me with great sympathy and said, 'Ah, you collected Greek soil'. I was stunned by her answer and replied, 'You mean Egyptian soil'. 'Oh yes, you are right. For you it is Egyptian because you are young, but for me it is Greek, because in my time Alexandria was a Greek city'. This interchange reveals not only an elderly woman's views about the Greekness of the city, but also the genealogical gap in the way Alexandrians of different ages perceive the modern city in terms of urban space and land.



Figure 6.17 Egyptian women looking at the Greco-Roman amphitheatre, 2012

The above testimonials to the 'lost city', however, were written by people (including Greeks), who were physically displaced, as they left the city during and after the 1960s. But this feeling of displacement was also felt by the few Greeks who remained in place and never experienced any kind of dislocation. For those who remained, the pre-1960s city was not lost in the same way. The physicality of the cityscape is still there; they are still negotiating space with the

Egyptians; they still have claims to ownership (not on a political but on a symbolic level). What they suggest is that they have had to learn new codes that will allow them to decipher the cues to behaviour present in the transformed contemporary environment. The concept of 'place loss' was used by Filipucci (2010) in her study on the violent destruction of landscapes and builtscapes caused by the war in Argonne, France. Although the destruction of the Alexandrian cityscape occurred for different reasons, the impact of this loss seemed to be equally painful. This can be explained in relation to Halbwachs argument, who sees physical surroundings as mnemonic devices, which provide individuals and groups with 'an image of permanence and stability that gives them a comforting image of their own continuity' (1980:128). If places are repositories and objectifications of identity and continuity, then the impact of the violent destruction of places can be very painful for individuals and collectivities (Casey, 1996; Feld and Basso, 1996).

Moreover, the two groups mean different things when they refer to post-1960s Alexandria. For those who left, Alexandria today is an ideological construct, an abstract idea, an image and a feeling expressed as 'nostalgia' and 'memory'. For those who stayed, their Alexandria is more realistic. They live in the same city but under radically altered cultural conditions from those of the past. They experience Alexandria with all their senses, but even some of the sights, sounds and smells have changed. Now, they have direct contact with the people and the urban environment, which they have to share with Egyptians who are culturally very different and numerically superior.

3. The Greek microcosm: Physical and ideological spaces

The dwindling Greek Alexandrian population and their gradual abandonment of public spaces, led them into a position of voluntary isolation. One of my interviewees in his early 50s described the way he uses and experiences the city in a very visual and performative way: 'Alexandria for me consists of small islands, such as the *Enosi*, the Greek Nautical Club, my work, and my home. I care

only about my islands and I don't care at all about what is happening in the open sea'.



Figure 6.18 Map of the Greek spaces in the city

My interviewee describes the city as being 'flooded' by Egyptians and refers to the limited Greek territory left for him to move in as 'small islands' (the communal spaces, home and work), which are restricted places with a private or semi-private character. The Egyptian 'sea' is of no interest to him and he crosses it only with the use of a device (a car), which helps him to move around, but also stay detached from the 'sea life'. This metaphor is a very telling illustration of the shrinkage of community spaces and buildings, but also of their almost exclusive use today (fig 6.18).

By the late 1970s, the smaller Greek *koinotites* in the suburbs of Alexandria (*Ibrahimia*, *Ramleh* etc) had merged with the *koinotita* of Alexandria (GKA), most institutions had been closed or changed use, and large properties had been sold. By the time of my research (2011-2012), only a few communal Greek institutions remained, serving the needs of the few hundred residents. Most Greek social activities are confined within the *Elliniko Tetragono*, located in *Chatby* in the city centre. It is there that, at the beginning of the 20th century, the

most important Greek educational institutions of the *koinotita* were located. Today the *Elliniko Tetragono* is where the Greek School (the only one left), the General Consulate of Greece, the Elders' House, the Boy and Girl Scouts headquarters and the *Enosi* (the Union) are all located. Alexandrians sometimes say that this entity unites all the Greeks and is unique, as its counterpart is found nowhere else, either on the mainland or in other Greek communities abroad. As already mentioned, this block emerged as the focal point of Greek activity and is still today the main meeting place for Greeks (Chatzifotis, 1999:517).



Figure 6.19 Church on a Sunday morning, 2012

Another popular Greek-owned institution is the ENOA, the historic Greek Nautical Club, dedicated to sailing and other water sports, located in one of the most beautiful spots in Alexandria. Today, it attracts older Greeks who patronize its restaurant. It is also where middle-class Greeks go to swim during the summer (the wealthier upper class go to private hotels or beaches). Asia Minor Association (*Mikrasiatikos*), is another Greek association with its own building, which used to be very active in the past as a meeting spot for Greeks from the *Ibrahimia* district. Although it still exists, it attracts mostly Egyptians nowadays.

The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate is also a very important site. There is a prevailing feeling that its presence in the city acts as a kind of guarantee,

insuring that the community will retain its Greek and Orthodox character and that it will continue to exist. But it also endows the community with a sense of pride and prestige. Churches are places whose role I underestimated at the beginning of my work. They are especially important to the old people and women who attend services on Sundays and holidays. But churches don't only have a purely religious function; they also provide social meeting points for every member of the Greek community (fig 6.19).

There are also two cultural centres: the Ptolemaios Scientific Institute which holds lectures in Greek, and the Hellenic Foundation for Culture (*Elliniko Idrima Politismou*), which offers classes in Greek to Egyptians. The latter belongs to the Greek government and its main aim is to spread Greek culture to Egyptians. The Centre has little appeal for the Greek community and few Greeks attend its cultural events. It is also the only Greek institution which is fully open to the Egyptians without any restrictions or dress code.

Greek Alexandrians today use community spaces in different ways. Some have the *Enosi* as their regular base. These tend to be a mixed group, consisting of people who hold official positions in the *koinotita*, representatives of all four generations, who although not always active, regularly attend all the community events in the *Elliniko Tetragono* or elsewhere. Another smaller group could be called the 'invisible' ones. Living on the margins of the community in voluntary isolation, they tend to be more passive, but are critical of the *koinotita* leaders, whom they consider incompetent loud mouths. They despise the *Enosi* as a place where gossip is rife, and they want no connection with the *koinotita* leaders or others who patronize the *Enosi*. The only place where both groups come together is the church during religious holidays.

3.1 Boundaries and margins: The creation of a voluntary exclusion

One man in his 50s, discussing his life in Alexandria, raised the issue of the disruption in the urban habits of the Greek Alexandrians. As he explained, 'We, the Greeks of Alexandria who were raised in the post-Nasser period, we don't

know our city. We have always lived in a fish bowl like goldfish. The routes we followed every day were exactly the same, to such an extent that if we could follow our footprints, these routes would have been engraved into the ground’.



Figure 6.20 Another view of the *Elliniko Tetragono*. The *Enosi* is below on the left.

My informant is an architect, a graduate of an Egyptian university whom I have known since my school days. Back then, in the 1980s, he was giving classes in drawing to the younger students at the Greek High School. Like most Greek Alexandrians, he visited Greece in summer: 'I liked to go to Greece, but every time I returned here, I had the feeling that a huge door was closing behind me. I had the impression that once back in Egypt I was losing contact with the outside world'. In his narrative, my interviewee used the metaphor of the 'fish bowl' to describe the living space and the way of life within the borders of the community, while referring to its members as 'goldfish'. This description is very common among Greek Alexandrians, especially those born after the 1960s, who also use the term 'golden cage', when talking about the same space. In both cases they mean a small area, with strict but transparent borders, which allows insiders and outsiders to observe each other. In employing the word 'gold', they are implying something precious. A 'golden cage' has the negative connotations of a restricted area, but also the positive quality inferred by the precious metal. Such a cage is used to keep safe something valuable. Similarly the 'fish bowl'

doesn't hold just any kind of fish, but 'golden' ones, beautiful and worthy of admiration but always kept behind the safety of the transparent glass. The material's transparency allows insiders to see the socio-cultural 'other' that exists and lives outside of the bowl, but does not allow them to actually contact those others and share their spaces.

Alexandria is shared and inhabited by older Greek Alexandrians who remember the city as 'another' place but also by younger people who have no direct memories of their own. The 'fish bowl-goldfish' metaphor is an apt description for the younger generations' feeling of living in a place without freedom. The elders watched the city transforming into something completely new and rationalized their decision to live in isolation by blaming the Egyptians. But the two younger generations who have no memories for comparison, were born into an existing 'golden cage', a restricted area, which was imposed on them by the elders for their own good (to prevent them from being integrated into Egyptian culture).

The creation of boundaries within the city of Alexandria resulted in this voluntary exclusion, which can be explained as a mechanism designed to protect the Greek Alexandrian's unique and valuable identity (as goldfish). Nowadays, owing to their dwindling population and the predominance of the Egyptians in the city, Greeks feel as though they live in a 'hostile' and 'potentially dangerous' environment. They use their uniqueness as a device for reinforcing the internal solidarity of their group; as a symbol of the distinctive identity they feel they have the duty to preserve (fig 6.21 and 6.22). They thus create strategies for imposing boundaries within the society and adopt – within the framework of their daily lives – a self-inflicted exclusion, which reinforces their feelings of collective survival among the 'others' (Sibley 2015).

Although the metaphor of the 'golden cage' is used to describe the limited space of the Greeks, it is mainly applied to the *Elliniko Tetragono*, with the *Enosi* as its centre. Growing up in Alexandria in the post-Nasser period, I had similar feelings of isolation and imprisonment. Years later, once in Greece, I found myself

describing my life in Alexandria as being limited 'to a big square block'. Within the broader urban context of the city of Alexandria, the *Elliniko Tetragono* is a place where most Greek Alexandrians spent and still spend their days and nights in the safety of a box-territory made to hold a very 'precious' cultural content.



Figure 6.21 The *Epitaphios* procession in the Evangelismos church, 2012

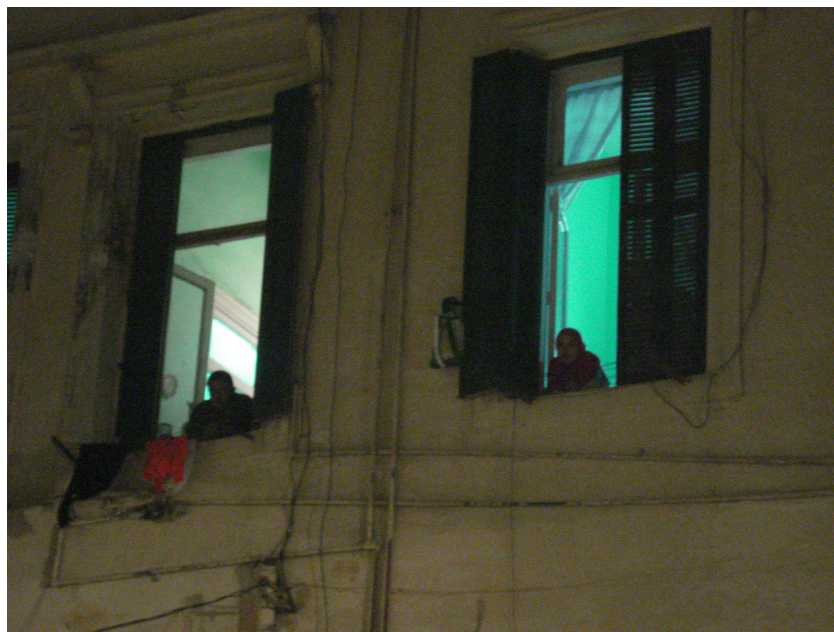


Figure 6.22 Egyptian women looking at the procession from their windows

The *Elliniko Tetragono* has a long history analogous to that of the Greek community and possesses all the functions a city resident could need (institutional, educational, social, athletic, relaxation, cultural, artistic, religious), open and sheltered areas. It also attracts Greeks of all generations, offering safety

and stability. It is carefully fenced with ideational and material borders that separate it from the surrounding streets and the rest of the city. In this sense the *Elliniko Tetragono* has all the attributes of a 'golden cage'. Drawing on Nora's views on the relationship between memory and space and the concept of *lieux de memoire* (sites of memory), I argue that the *Elliniko Tetragono* can be seen as a site of memory, which serves as a powerful symbol and repository of memory, a site for both symbolic control and symbolic resistance.

Until the 1980s, Greek community spaces had a more private character, with quite strict boundaries, which Egyptians were not allowed to enter. But in the last three decades, this exclusion could no longer be enforced and Greek spaces became less exclusive and more open to Egyptians; in a way the outside world started to turn in on them. This development greatly upset the Greeks of the two older generations, who began to complain that 'community places, especially the *Enosi* and the Nautical Club, the principal spots where we gather and socialize, are nowadays packed with Egyptians'.

The emerging generation reacted strongly to the older generations' views against opening communal places to Egyptians. A young man in his mid 30s who owns the restaurant in *Enosi* told me: 'The older people are racist. I grew up inside a golden cage but I don't mind. Fortunately, this cage has begun to expanded. I'm the first person who brought Egyptians and Armenians into the *Enosi*. This was at a time when my uncle was president of the *koinotita* and he had imposed certain restrictions on Egyptians. They were allowed to enter only on specific days. At first, everyone was boycotting me, but now they've used to it'.

3.2 'Filming a walk in the city' (in DVD)

In the course of my attempt to involve all members of the community in the visual representation of their community life and space, I realized that different generations selected different tools for depicting their theme. To approach the students I visited the Greek High School several times. The principal allowed me to enter the classroom on a couple of occasions, and talk with students from the

three upper grades about their lives in Alexandria. On one of my visits I asked them to present something for the exhibition, and although they were not enthusiastic about the idea, they eventually agreed to produce a short documentary film. A group of eight high school students participated in the project, boys and girls, whose parents were of different origins (two with both parents Greek Alexandrians, two Greek-Egyptians, one both Greeks from Greece (Neo-Alexandrians), one Greek-Portuguese, two both Egyptians). They were asked to use a video camera to shoot an everyday walk in the city and make some comments. By examining how they move about the city, it became clear to me that although they may not be of 'purely' Greek origin, they too live inside the enclosed margins of the 'golden cage'.

In the film, while students are interviewing one another (I was present for only one walk), they provide some insights into everyday life in Alexandria and highlight certain urban elements: streets and avenues with traffic, metro stations, buildings, a school ('that is only for girls'), statues (of ancient Greek heroes and 'an eminent although blind Arab poet'), a modern wall mosaic ('neither Roman nor Byzantine but Egyptian'), the seaside and the library (where they meet for coffee not for the books). The non-Egyptians also express their feelings towards the Egyptians ('lovely people') and Alexandria (a 'safe and beautiful' city).

But interestingly enough, all of them follow a similar route that begins or ends at the *Enosi*, which they call their 'second' and even 'first' home (in one case), as this is where they spend most of their time. In their narratives they use a language that refers to family relationships, kinship and the intimacy and privacy offered by this 'home'. They all agreed that one of the positive aspects of living in a restricted area is that they can all meet here without having to make arrangements in advance. They feel like a family, and they care about each other. They also consider the *Enosi* a protected space where they feel safe. As one of them said, 'If I compare my life to the lives of mainland Greeks of our age, I would say that we have it much easier here'. At the same time, they also have strong negative feelings about living in Alexandria. They all complain of boredom, too

much gossiping, and the lack of freedom to do what they want or, in the case of the girls, to dress the way they want. Although Alexandria is a city of 10 million people, they all grumbled that there are no places for them to go, so they end up staying in the *Enosi*. One girl's comment regarding their future made towards the end of the film was revealing. When asked if she believes that the future has any changes in store – more places to go, more things to do – she simply answers, 'I think this is how things were in the old days, how things are today and how they will continue to be in the future'.



Figure 6.23. Bazaar organized by the high school students at the *Enosi*, with the Consul and the Patriarch shopping, 2012

Her comment, and those of the other students, reflects the feeling of imprisonment described earlier, together with the impossibility of imagining a more desirable future for themselves. Although the opening up of community spaces to Egyptians remains a serious issue among community members, in fact the school students who spend most of their time in the *Enosi* and the *Elliniko Tetragono* are for the most part Egyptians, or children of mixed marriages. This raises the question of why these students may refuse to venture outside the boundaries of the Greek community while living in an Egyptian environment. A second question relates to the older Greek Alexandrians and how they may react to the idea of sharing their cherished spaces with young Egyptians. In partial explanation, I can only add that because the students are attending the Greek school, they are considered to be almost part of the Greek community, because they participate actively in all community events and their presence supports the

very existence of the community boosting its numbers. They may be borderline members, uncomfortable members on the margins of the community, but they are members nonetheless. This albeit ambiguous status of the young students suggests that the community today is far more inclusive and embracing than the rhetoric would suggest. Additionally it provides a clue to the direction of the ground being prepared, indeed made fertile, for the recent decision to rethink the notion of the Greek School altogether.



Figure 6.24 A ball organized by the school at the *Enosi* with the participation of all community members, 2012

This chapter, as my informants' narratives revealed, is about a sense of losing place, but also about a sense of spatial restriction. Both can be understood in terms of Greek Alexandrians' relationship with Egypt and the Egyptians, which leads us to a discussion about the boundaries that are being drawn and redrawn, shifted, defended and worried over, between Greek Alexandrians and other non-Greek Alexandrians, reminding us of Mary Douglas' (1966) and Barths' (2000) arguments on boundaries and margins. It therefore becomes clear that the Egyptians as 'others' are also intimately connected to the historical processes of place making and place loss, as well as to the process of reproducing the Greek Alexandrian identity, as will be discussed further in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Greek Schools: Institutional spaces of the Greek Alexandrian identity

This chapter considers the importance of the Greek schools and the social activities hosted on their premises. Schools are viewed as ‘spaces’ of significance in Alexandria, particularly in relation to cultural transmission and reproduction. The centrality of Greek schools became evident to me from the photographs selected by members of the Greek community for the exhibition. While exploring the implications of formal education for the community and the ways in which ‘Greekness’ has been articulated through its educational institutions, one has to take into account the ways in which the role and scale of Greek educational institutions have altered over the years, as reflected in the experience of different generations. The current chapter therefore asks the question, what are the political and social implications of the approach to formal education in Alexandria and how have these particular strategies related to the urban geographies of the Greek Alexandrian community?

Greek education in Egypt has been, and continues to be, an extension of the educational policies of the Greek state. In the past, the majority of Greek Alexandrians were educated in schools that were established to serve the exclusive needs of the Greek Alexandrian community (Karanasou, 1999:43-46). Currently, the number of students has declined and the majority, as mentioned earlier, are either the product of mixed marriages, or Egyptians. At the time of my fieldwork the only remaining Greek schools in Alexandria (one primary and one secondary) had become the focal point for community members and leaders, but also a source of many conflicts about the community’s future. Given that both schools operate in the same area (the *Elliniko Tetragono*), it is common for most Greek Alexandrians to refer to the two as one, as simply the ‘Greek School’.

As a member of the *koinotita* board told me, ‘The school is a very sensitive issue. Not easily touched. Much thought is needed before we can proceed with any

decisions concerning its future'. By examining community attitudes to change and the effects of this change on the perceived continuity of Greek identity in Alexandria, this chapter also explores the different ways community members use education, and the process of schooling, as mechanisms to shape their children's future social position and identity.

I chose to focus on the school because it emerged as such an important point of reference in the process of collecting photos for the exhibition. However, as I did not carry out extensive research in the school, this chapter is not an ethnography of the school. Instead, my data are based on comments, reflections, images, and stories gathered in the field about the school's place in the past, present and future of the community. Because of its central role in terms of reproducing the community, the school also provides a prism through which the changing circumstances of the community can be understood.

1. Visual representations of the school buildings and activities

On examining the photographs that were given to me for the exhibition, I realized that the majority of them related to the schools and their activities (fig 7.1). This, as well as the numerous stories associated with these images which emphasized the unique character of Greek education in Egypt, led me to examine the role and the importance of education for the community. A pertinent aspect of these stories was their repeated reference to the quality of the education offered by Greek schools in the past, which was a source of great pride for community members ¹⁴⁵.

The photographs I collected were mainly black and white; they depicted scenes from school life from the middle of the 19th century to the end of the 1960s. None of those who collaborated (whether young or old) felt it was necessary to provide more recent colour photographs, despite the younger people's admission that they had plenty of these at their disposal. This caused me to wonder whether the preference for older photos somehow indicated that community members considered the quality of education, or the way the school operated, as having been superior in the past.

This question related mainly to the older Alexandrians, given that, as mentioned earlier, the younger generation did not contribute any photos to the exhibition. To address some of the issues regarding school life, and discover what members of the Greek community consider to be a 'proper' education for young people today, I decided to search, on my own initiative, for more recent photographs, which I later incorporated into the exhibition.



Figure 7.1 The Famileiadios Primary School in Attarin area

Up to the 1990s, school festivities were recorded by professional photographers. Since then this task has been taken over by an active member of the community and photography enthusiast who gave me access to his archive. His contribution supplemented the photographs provided by other members of the community who offered images relating to earlier decades (from the 1970s to the 1990s). I also conducted participatory exercises with a group of students, which generated visual materials that were subsequently presented in the exhibition.

The selection of the photographs exhibited in room 3 was based on thematic criteria, arranged into the following categories: the first consisted of photographs of school life from the students' perspective. These were mainly older

photographs. In formal portraits, male and female students were captured in stiff, old-fashioned poses, inside a classroom or out in the open, sometimes accompanied by a teacher. Also in this category were snapshots of everyday school life, where the students are more casual and spontaneous. The second category depicted sports activities and events involving various Greek schools of Alexandria in the community and the municipal stadiums. In these images we see students marching, performing gymnastics or competing in track and field events. The third category covers events and celebrations that took place on the premises and grounds of the Greek Alexandrian schools.

When I compared older and more recent photographs, that is to say, photographs taken before and after the 1960s, I observed that the themes were similar across the years. However, there were obvious differences with regard to the number of students, the size of the events and the characteristics of the student body, which became more heterogeneous over time. A further observation, related to space, is that the majority of the photographs given to me were taken in the two schools located in the *Elliniko Tetragono*. I therefore decided to divide the education-themed photographs and place them in two discrete areas within the exhibition.

One panel under the title 'education' was placed in room 1. This was dedicated to the past, as it presented photographs of various primary schools in Alexandria that no longer exist. The rest of the photographs on education, taken at the Averofeio High School and the Salvageios Vocational School, during the early and later years, were hung in room 3, which was dedicated to the *Elliniko Tetragono*.

2. Enculturation and education

In order to discuss the role of education in the Alexandrian community, a brief overview of the anthropology of education is needed. This subfield of anthropology is widely associated with the pioneering work of Margaret Mead (1928, 1931), and later George Spindler (1963), Solon Kimball (1972, 1979), Dell Hymes (1980) and others; as the name suggests, the focus is on education, both formal and informal¹⁴⁶. Anthropologists of education explore the ways in which

teaching and learning are organized socially and culturally. Levinson (2000:2) introduces his collection of famous texts in anthropology and education as follows: 'The process of education can be construed broadly as humanity's unique methods of acquiring, transmitting, and producing knowledge for interpreting and acting upon the world. In the broadest sense, education underlies every human group's ability to adapt to its environment. Effective education allows a group to continually adapt and thereby reproduce the conditions of its existence'. Early anthropologists of education largely sought to address questions regarding the retaining of historical cohesion and continuity of a society through an analysis of the process of cultural transmission. Cultural transmission, which involves the transfer of a sense of identity and the passing on of basic cultural knowledge and values across generations, has been defined by some scholars as enculturation (Herskovits 1948; Shimahara 1970).

For Hoebel, enculturation is 'both a conscious and an unconscious conditioning process whereby man, as child and adult, achieves competence in his culture, internalizes his culture and becomes thoroughly enculturated' (1958:643). He believes that it begins before birth and continues until death and the result of this process is the identity of the person within a group, since society seeks to make each member a fully responsible individual within the whole. Although in many ways enculturation replicates the norms and traditions of previous generations, the degree of similarity among the cultures of each successive generation through enculturation varies.

After many years of focus on processes of cultural transmission and the achievement of cultural continuity, anthropologists began to examine more closely how education contributes to change. In response to such questions, attention turned away from cultural transmission and the role of 'teachers' in cultural acquisition, to the role of 'learners'. In the 1990s Lave and Wenger had proposed the theory of 'situated learning', in which society is understood as fundamentally consisting of overlapping 'communities of practice' that serve as the vehicles for cultural acquisition (Lave 1991; Wenger 1998).

Cultural acquisition brought about the recognition of cultural complexity. Culture was no longer understood as a set of 'shared' or common meanings that one could identify with a particular society, but as a pool of symbolic features, distributed unevenly across societies and social groups, which individuals can negotiate and appropriate with varying degrees of agency. According to Lavinson and Gonzalez (2008), 'another concept that emerged to encompass the processes of cultural transmission and acquisition in education was that of cultural production, as even in those cases where education is oriented primarily towards achieving continuity, the theoretical possibility of modification and change always exists'.

The complexities and uncertainties of reproduction and transmission in Lison Tolosana's study of generations in mid 20th-century Spain illustrates the diverging values and orientations of different generations (2014). According to him, these differences are largely a matter of historical context. Cultural values, political ideals, orientations towards the world are not subject to mechanical transmission; instead transmission, the lack of it or incomplete transmission, reflect both the dynamic of generational relationships themselves (Mannheim 1952) and the changing conditions of society. In circumstances where change is radical, as occurred in Spain with the Civil War and Franquismo, changing perspectives across generations can be expected to be more marked than in contexts where there is greater social and cultural continuity. This point is especially relevant to the case of the Greek Alexandrians, given the critical events that have affected the stability of their community. It is particularly clear in narratives about the Egyptian revolution of 1952 and more recently in the Greek Alexandrians' reactions to the declining numbers. The question then arises is what role may formal educational institutions play in attempting to perpetuate particular values and ensure continuity.

2.1. The School: Formal education and the reproduction of identity

Formal education in school is typically an age-graded, hierarchical setting where, as Friedman Hansen (1979) puts it, 'learners learn vicariously, in roles and

environments defined as distinct from those in which the learning will eventually be applied'. This form of education has been of interest to political scientists, sociologists, developmental planners and anthropologists alike (Rudolph and Rudolph 1972; Jeffery and Jeffery 1996, etc). All of them placed varying emphasis on the 'modern' materialization of formal education, whether by examining the overall institutionalized systems of knowledge production and transmission, or by focusing on the curricula and schooling processes that support these systems. Sociologists, particularly in their work on schooling, contributed to an understanding of the social reproduction of certain groups (such as the elite or the working class; see Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Willis 1977), as well as of processes of social, racial, ethnic discrimination, and so on (Ladson-Billings 2004; Mickelson and Heath 1999; Canessa 2004, etc).

The concept of cultural reproduction was first developed by Pierre Bourdieu in the early 1970s. Initially, Bourdieu's work was on education in a modern society. He argued that the education system was used to 'reproduce' the culture of the dominant class in order for the dominant class to continue to hold and release power (1973). Althusser (1971), on the other hand, makes a very strong argument for the role of education as an instrument for the reproduction of the state and therefore of relations of power. Education for him is related to reproduction through and in relation to ideology. Although in the case of Greek Alexandrians we are not dealing with a state, Althusser's ideas can be a helpful approach to the issue of how identity ideologies might be passed on and how they might work in practice (as ideologies, interpellating its subjects)¹⁴⁷.

However, what is more relevant to my thesis is the school's contribution to the shaping of ethnic identity¹⁴⁸. The extent to which the knowledge offered by the educational system contains elements of ethnicity has been discussed by a number of scholars (Lowe 1999: 231-233). At the core of this debate, we find the positions expressed by Weber (1976) and Gellner (1983), who point out the ethno-unifying character of the educational system. For Gellner, nationalism is a sociological condition and a likely result of modernization. His theory, which encompasses the political and cultural aspects of the transition from agrarian to

industrial society, focuses on the unifying and culturally homogenizing roles of educational systems. Weber, in his study on the modernization of rural France between 1870-1914, also focuses on school and education as essential to the development of national identity. According to him, schools did not just teach French; they also implanted symbols in their pupils' consciousness that would serve as 'points of reference that straddled regional boundaries exactly as national patriotism was meant to do' (1976: 337).

Again, the above scholars are discussing the formation of national identities in relation to national states, which is very different from the case of Greek Alexandrians. What is striking about the Greek Alexandrians (as will be shown below) is that they are attempting to carry out the functions of state (education, governance of people and territory) within a nation-state with which they have a very ambivalent relationship.

3. The Greek educational system in Egypt

The historical literature on Greek education in Egypt has devoted much attention to the period before the Second World War (Soulogiannis 1999; Lekkou 2004; Karanasou 1999). Focusing primarily on the schools of Alexandria, these studies view education as the main mechanism through which Greek national identity was strengthened (Kitroeff 1989:170-171), as well as the main tool for social control by the Alexandrian Greek bourgeoisie (Trimi-Kyrou 1996:638-648). Ntalachanis also analyses the role of education during the period from 1937 to the early 1960s, and highlights the efforts of the Greek community to adjust to the needs of the new Egyptian reality (2015:200-215).

Historically, the education of the Greek diaspora has generally been related to, organized and defined by the Greek state. Nevertheless, Greek education in the diaspora does not abide by homogeneous rules. The educational bodies and the types of Greek education services provided¹⁴⁹ vary widely, based on the special social, political, economic and cultural factors which exist in the host country. In

addition, they are influenced by the immigration policy of the latter, the geographical distance from Greece, but also by the educational policy of the Greek state¹⁵⁰ (Damanakis 2007: 80).



Figure 7.2 National Day celebration in the community stadium, 1949 (by Rittas)

The Greek educational system in Egypt initially drew its strength and character from the autonomy granted by the Capitulation system¹⁵¹. For many decades, the Egyptian state had no right to intervene in the running of foreign schools in the country, including all Greek institutions. This started to change with the abolition of the Capitulations in 1937, and after the end of the transitional period (in the 1950s), state control over the country's foreign schools was gradually introduced. Greek schools were, however, excluded¹⁵² from these reforms and therefore managed to maintain their autonomy (Ntalachanis 2015:184-186).

Furthermore, the short geographical distance between Greece and Egypt facilitated closer relations between the Greek community of Alexandria and Greece, and promoted the adoption of a Greco-centric educational model, in which the Greek state supervised the Greek schools through its local inspectors and diplomatic representatives. It was also very common for Greek students to continue their higher education in Greece (although many returned to Egypt

after completing their studies), as following a Greek programme in Egypt facilitated their integration into Greek universities.

Many academics view school textbooks as the materialization of state ideology; therefore studies of textbooks produced by national educational ministries can be mined to understand how states (or agents of the state) understand and promote their own histories, how some events are remembered or forgotten, and how changing curricular material reflects changing politics (e.g. Culp 2001, Harwich 2010, Bénéï 2009). Many authors included in the book *What Is Our Country?* (Frangoudaki and Dragona, eds 1997), who analysed textbooks used in Greek schools argue that the contemporary Greek school describes the Greek nation through the same interpretive tools that were adopted into the nationalist discourse of the 19th century. Avdela in the same volume states that the Greek educational system plays an important part in reproducing a romanticized view of the nation as a 'physical' entity, based on a 'national narrative' that revolves around shared memories and characteristics. The educational system places great emphasis on a historical narrative that stresses the continuation of Hellenism from Antiquity until today, which is a major component of Greek national identity. Moreover, she stresses that 'language, history and geography have been the primary subjects of the school curriculum, which promote cultural homogeneity of the nation's body and formulate the embodiment of the nation, namely, the "essence" of the nation' (1997:34). Avdela also argues that one of the basic goals of the school is 'to cultivate the true patriotic spirit of the students and their national identity' (1997: 28). Her views can be traced in Nikolaos Vatimbellas' statement when he was vice president of the GKA in 1946¹⁵³.

'In order for a Greek to remain Greek, he must preserve his language, learn the history of his homeland, get to know the traditions and the dreams of the race, his obligations towards the nation to which he belongs, and all this he can only obtain in the Greek schools. This is the principal aim of their foundation in the Greek *koinotites* abroad and this is the real reason for their existence'.

In Egypt, the Greek state had always been the regulating body behind the education of the Greeks and its role had been considered fundamental in mainly practical terms. Given the overwhelming majority of community schools¹⁵⁴, the local *koinotites* were responsible – via educational committees – for the operation, administration, curriculum and syllabus of the schools. From the very beginning, all schools in Egypt, including the schools in Alexandria, belonged to the category of the ‘Pure Greek Schools’ (*Amigos Ellinika Scholeia*) of the diaspora¹⁵⁵. They operated within the framework of a Greek, nationalist-politically-centred educational approach, whose goal was to homogenize the Greeks of Egypt, thus preserving and promoting the Greek national identity (fig 7.2). In contrast to the various types of schools that operate in other countries where Greek communities exist¹⁵⁶, the schools of Egypt were subject to the Greek legal system and supervision, and operated with the help of Greek professors who were recognized by the Ministry of Education.

In addition, Greek schools in Egypt followed the same curriculum as the schools in the homeland, subject to slight modifications, especially in the field of foreign languages, and therefore they used basically the same educational materials. As a consequence, they were cut off from the local, social, cultural environment of Egypt, and after some necessary adjustments, they operated as if they were located in Greece. Until 1961 schools in Egypt essentially followed a Greek state curriculum, which placed emphasis on classicism and the reproduction of the values of the ‘glorious’ Greek past. With it, the teaching of the Greek language, ancient and modern, and the Greek Orthodox religion were promoted, while the Egyptian cultural and spatial context was deliberately neglected during that whole period. What is also striking is that the only history ever taught at school was Greek¹⁵⁷, and this is true even today.



Figure 7.3 Arabic language class, 2012 (by Billiris)

In addition, the *koinotita* leadership was slow to deal with the question of the teaching of Arabic¹⁵⁸ in Greek schools in Egypt (fig 7.3). Although courses in Arabic were introduced in the 1920s, it was only in the post-war era that a more systematic approach to teaching Arabic was undertaken in some schools, especially in Alexandria; however, it was not very successful (Lekkou 2001:173). This discrepancy was created due to the difference between Classical Arabic, which is the written form and the language of conducting business, and the everyday Arabic, which is used in daily speech. The majority of Greeks in Egypt possessed a very basic knowledge of colloquial Arabic, but only a few of them could write and work in it¹⁵⁹. Another factor contributing to the neglect of Arabic was the absence of any practical necessity to know the language of the host country. When from 1942 onwards the use of Arabic started gradually to expand as the official and sole language of the state and business, fluency became essential for Greeks wishing to work in Egypt. But the most important factor in the neglect of the language was the absence of any substantial contact with the Egyptians, especially in Alexandria (Ntalachanis 2015). This isolation was enforced by the Greek educational system which was so Greco-centric. The many changes in Egyptian society after the 1960s, and the gradual transformation of the Greek Alexandrian community did not affect the

educational policy of the Greek School, which continued to operate following the Greek curriculum, which includes no courses in Egyptian history and geography and provides very poor instruction in Arabic (Ntalachanis 2015:177-209).

3.1 The Greek Schools in Alexandria

Unlike the majority of other European schools in Alexandria that were run by a variety of religious authorities or missions (Jesuits, Catholics, Armenian Patriarchate etc.), Greek schools in Egypt were secular institutions, the majority of which were run by and founded by the *koinotites*, known as the *koinotika scholeia* (community schools).



Figure 7.4 The entrance to Averofeio High School, 2011

In terms of geographical distribution, Greek primary schools were present in almost every city where a Greek *koinotita* was established, while secondary level education was concentrated in Alexandria and Cairo. The first Greek school in Alexandria under the *koinotita* initiative¹⁶⁰ was the Tositsaia School¹⁶¹, founded in 1856. In the city there were a number of primary level community schools¹⁶², while for secondary education (*Gymnasium*), The Averofeio High School for Boys and Girls established in 1885 was considered to be the best¹⁶³ (fig 7.4).

Apart from the education provided by the *koinotites*, there were also schools

founded by the various associations¹⁶⁴, a few under the auspices of the Patriarchate, and a number of private schools¹⁶⁵ that claimed to offer the same high level of education as the *koinotika scholeia*. But the vast majority of Greek pupils were educated in schools dependent on the *koinotites*, because from the 19th century through to the early 1960s, they were considered to be the best in Alexandria. There were also a few technical schools, like the Salvageios School, which served the needs of the Greek community for a long time by offering vocational education in a range of professions that were relevant to future Greek labourers.

The Greek educational institutions in Egypt, including those in Alexandria, were not aimed at disseminating Greek culture in Egypt, as was the case with the French and British schools, which 'sustained the strategy for cultural penetration through the expansion of their languages' (Abecassis 2000, cited in Ntalachanis 2015:197). The Greek schools, like the Italian and the Armenian, were established to serve the exclusive educational needs of their particular communities. Although the term 'pure Greek schools' refers to schools that strictly follow the principles and curricula of the Greek educational system, in Egypt it was also associated with schools that restricted recruitment to students of both Greek origin and citizenship. Soulogiannis states that it was extremely rare for a Greek school to accept students of other ethnic groups, but even in those cases Greek citizenship¹⁶⁶ was mandatory (1999:97). Another source from the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs¹⁶⁷ states that the Greek schools of the *koinotita* started to accept pupils of Greek origin with Egyptian citizenship only after 1960-61, when the mass departure movement had already begun and threatened the viability and the existence of these schools (source cited in Ntalachanis 2015:183). However, it seems that while this happened on very rare occasions back in the 1960s, it has not been the case for many decades. In an effort to limit the number of students of Egyptian origin attending the Greek School, the *koinotita* does not accept any students with Egyptian citizenship.

Nevertheless, in the past, not all Egyptian Greeks sent their children to Greek

schools, and a significant number of Greek pupils attended foreign schools¹⁶⁸. These were mainly schools associated with the USA or European countries, and rarely included Egyptian schools. In Alexandria in particular, attending an Egyptian school was thought to lead to inevitably to assimilation into Egyptian society and furthermore the educational standard of these schools was considered to be poor. In cases where Greek children did not attend Greek schools, other means were sought to develop and consolidate their sense of identification with Greece through tutoring in the Greek language or participation in extra-curricular activities.

The emphasis on Greekness so vigorously pursued by *koinotita* representatives and the schools themselves created feelings of suspicion regarding other European schools as well as the Egyptian. The high number of Greek pupils attending other foreign schools in Egypt before the 1960s was a source of concern for Greek diplomats, the *koinotita* leadership and the Patriarchate, who saw in this choice a constant threat to the preservation of Greekness (Lekkou, 2004:260). The Bulletin of the GCCA (15-7-1948)¹⁶⁹ commented in 1948 that:

“Foreign mentalities will affect them [the students] due to the teachings and the foreign environment, hence their national character will be weakened. This will also result in the weakening of their natural interest in and their love towards their Motherland’.

One reason that led Greek parents to enrol their children in schools associated with western countries was so they would be fluent in another language. Wealthy Greek families who could afford the fees of those private schools often intended their children to attend universities in Europe. Another reason in the case of mixed marriages with non- Egyptian partners, was the idea that a non-Greek school would be a better choice for children of mixed origin. Georgelin (2005:103) uses the concept of *Xenomanie Levantine* in order to describe the tendency of the foreign populations of the Eastern Mediterranean (including Jews, Greeks and Syrians who had long relations with the Arab East) to adopt

Western European behaviour and customs. Referring to the Greek case, some scholars describe their fears of potential assimilation and loss of Greek identity, as 'the microbe of cosmopolitanism', which 'infected' those who adopted such patterns, and was a sign of social and cultural superiority over lower-class Greeks and Egyptians (Athanasiadis 1975:14, cited in Ntalachanis 2015:198). Ntalachanis adds that 'the risk of dehellenization was the disease, and attendance at a Greek school was the treatment' (2015: 198).

The majority of the Greek schools were oriented towards a classical education in reflection of the strong white-collar background of the pupils' parents. These schools reproduced the classical model of education defined by the Greek national curriculum, which meant that they were set up mainly to serve the needs of the Greek labour market and that of the *koinotita's* leadership. According to some scholars (Trimi-Kyrou 1996: 638-648; Ntalachanis 2015:200-215), the labour market for the Egyptian Greeks constituted an essentially closed, self-sustaining system within which Greeks were employed by Greeks for the most part. The local Greek upper class, which was in charge of running the *koinotites* and the schools, was the main employer of the community members. Thus, the schools served their own economic needs since they turned out potential white-collar workers for community enterprises and the school functioned as a mechanism of social control that penetrated all the levels of community society. Moreover, Ntalachanis points out that 'as the members of the economic elite were leading the *koinotites* and other community institutions, they wanted the education of their young people to be purely Greek. Otherwise, not only would the ethnic character of the *koinotites* (and the schools dependent on them) be under serious threat, but the community itself would also be at risk' (2015:199). These ideas reflect Bourdieu's (1973) notions of the school as the main mechanism for the 'reproduction' of the dominant class.

What is interesting though is that the concern with cultural transmission, the passing on of values and preservation of a Greek Alexandrian identity, seems to be related to the reproduction of institutions, and the preservation of particular statuses and positions within them. So the question arises here is whether this is

a matter of class reproduction. Even if this is the case, there seem to be some important qualifications, as the reproduction of the elite and those who occupy, or will potentially occupy, the key positions and the institutional spaces, must also rely on the reproduction of the less privileged members of the community. If this has always been the case, as suggested by the above scholars, then the question the community might face today is how to preserve these privileges (material and non-material) when the numbers of Greek Alexandrians are so limited? Will they also have to involve non-Greeks in their own reproduction? As will become more apparent below, the opening of the school to recruit half-Egyptians or Egyptian students has become a major issue among its members.

3. 2 School activities and events

Symbols of ethnicity, nation-state and religion play a crucial role in the educational process since they are the elements that form the Greek identity; they are instilled in the daily school routine (raising of the flag, morning prayer) and on ceremonial events (national holidays, school parades etc.).



Figure 7.5 National Day celebration in Salvageios school, 1952. Today's primary school (Katsibris collection)

The Greek schools, having been assigned the important task of educating and cultivating their students, mentally and physically, have always developed

various types of additional activities and extracurricular events to further this task. The education of children is complemented by a variety of rituals and practices, all of which are meant to evoke and celebrate the national spirit. The wide variety of activities associated with the school, including social events, marches, national dance performances, concerts and plays. Such events tend to be organized around Greek holidays or anniversaries.¹⁷⁰ Other activities commemorate holidays in the Greek Orthodox calendar such as Easter, Christmas, Epiphany and so on, where students participate, for example, as in the *Epitaphios* procession on Good Friday. School activities also include annual educational trips to Greece and Cyprus or excursions within Egypt, as well as plays, concerts, exhibitions, etc. Within the framework of the student union,¹⁷¹ there was scope for a student to join various groups (student councils, student choirs, Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, student publications etc.). Currently, the Scouts are responsible for most of the extracurricular activities¹⁷², organizing excursions, parties, participation in religious and other events.



Figure 7.6 School event with traditional dances at the school's amphitheatre, 1960s (Thlivitou collection)

In line with Greek educational requirements, the Greek schools in Alexandria have had a physical education programme in place since the early 20s. Through donations from benefactors, the *koinotita* provided most schools with facilities for physical training. This resulted in the construction of gymnasiums and of school playing fields. These facilities were a key factor in the adoption of physical education as a compulsory school subject and made possible the subsequent expansion of games and sports in the years that followed (Lekkou, 2004).



Figure 7.7 Gymnastics at the Municipal stadium, early 20th century (Averofeio collection)

The large number of photographs I was given for the exhibition depicting school gymnastics displays suggests that these events spark vivid memories among adult Alexandrians. The end of the school year was marked by these displays, where students and teachers did their best to impress the audience with their skill and physical prowess. According to Albanidis (2012:8) school gymnastics displays were formally established by the Greek state in Greece in 1883 and survived until 1975. After that, they lost their character as a spectacle and developed into a competitive sport. The Greek schools of Alexandria, which followed the Greek school curriculum to the letter, did not hold gymnastics

displays until 1920. This was because it was not until the 1916-1917 school year that the GKA bought the *Chatby* grounds and opened a gymnasium.

Older Alexandrians who gave me photographs depicting themselves participating in those events recall that to achieve an impressive, precise and well-synchronized display of gymnastics exercises, students had to rehearse and train for many months, day and night (fig 7.7). The gymnastics displays included students from all classes, who marched in front of public officials and community members, lined up in the middle of the field, and then performed Swedish gymnastics and traditional Greek dances¹⁷³, as well as competing in track and field events. Many photographs show students performing various exercises and competing. The boys usually wore a white uniform, short trousers and white shoes, while the girls wore a white skirt and blouse. The pace of the activities was set by students who had practised playing the drums especially for those occasions, although in later years the live drums were replaced by recordings.



Figure 7.8 Schoolgirls watching the games at the Municipal stadium, 1950s

Albanidis (2012:11) points out that the gymnastics displays had many benefits, aside from physical exercise¹⁷⁴. He argues that they promoted homogeneity, uniformity, rhythmic movement, coordination, and the ability to obey various marching commands, which, as a result, encouraged discipline and good conduct in all students, male and female. According to the majority of the older Greek

Alexandrians, who shared their photos with me and who as students had participated in these displays, the technical skill, harmony and synchronization visible in those gymnastics displays were a testament, not only to the discipline of the students, but also to the good work done by the Greek schools. Thus, most of my informants (parents, students and teachers) thought the gymnastics displays were the most important event of the entire school year and both teachers and students worked diligently to achieve the best results possible. The importance of such displays of discipline and achievement must also be understood in the context of how they reflected identity and projected claims to cultural worth and recognition by other sectors of a multicultural city like Alexandria (7.8).



Figure 7.9 School games at the community stadium, 1970's
(Vafeiadis collection)

The space where these events used to take place was highly regarded. At the height of the schools' success, when enrolment was high, the community stadium in *Chatby* could only host the preliminary games; the finals were held in the Alexandria Municipal Stadium until the late 1960s. This means that the gathering there of all the students and teachers from every Greek school in Alexandria combined with the thousands of Greeks in the audience for those magnificent presentations, can be also seen as a performative approach to Greekness; as a performative way to express, promote and strengthen Greek identity, and as an exhibition of the size of the Greek community in comparison to other foreign

groups, and its dynamic presence in the city. In addition, athletic and gymnastic events performed by the young are also an indicator of the dynamic qualities of the community and confidence in its future. For, as one of my interviewees noted, 'We derive our strength from our youth'.



Figure 7.10 Student's parade in school games, 2000 (by Eleutheriou)

Gymnastics continued to be performed in the Greek stadium until the early 1980s, but from then on the athletic events included only school parades, track meets, and traditional Greek dances. The photographs displayed at the exhibition give us visual information about the social dynamics and cultural changes in the Greek Alexandrian community from the early 20th century to the present. Photographs show students performing from the 1970s up to date (fig 7.9). What is obvious from these photographs is the gradual decline in the numbers of both students and spectators at the events. It is also apparent that the students have lost their military discipline ¹⁷⁵, and there is less coordination and homogeneity among their groups, features that were very characteristic of the photographs from previous decades. In addition, there is a marked change in the student body, with many children from mixed marriages as well as Egyptians (fig 7.10).

Nevertheless, despite the decline in school activities today, Greek Alexandrians still feel proud watching the Greek School students participating in various events. This statement is corroborated by a home video posted on a Facebook page under the title *Averofeio agapi mou* (*Averofeio my love*), where footage from the school games of 2012 is accompanied by the voice of the presenter, who says:

‘There’s few of us left, but what you see is the proof that we are still going strong, that there is still Greek soul; that Hellenism (*o ellinismos*) is still here. It’s still present even if it’s in this form’¹⁷⁶.

4. Glories of the past and anxieties about the future

An interesting feature that has been noted by many historians, and which is apparent in the narratives of the older Alexandrians, is that the Greeks in Egypt prided themselves on having achieved a higher standard of education to that provided by the public education system in Greece itself. This view was expressed in a statement in an Alexandrian newspaper ¹⁷⁷: ‘Our schools have so far been a paradigm to be copied and are among the best, if not the best, abroad, surpassing by far the public schools in Greece’ (*Tachydromos* 1962). The Greek community was not financially dependent on the Greek state in terms of building facilities, as almost all the schools were built and funded by the donations made by local Greek notables, some of whom gave their names to the schools (the Averofeio after Averof, the Tositsaia after Tositsas etc). Schools in Egypt enjoyed superior facilities and technical equipment in comparison to their counterparts in Greece. Education was highly valued. One indication of the importance given to education in Egypt, at least until the late 1930s, was the relatively low rate of illiteracy¹⁷⁸ within the community in comparison to Greece. Also, Alexandrians were proud of the strict discipline of their schools. As one informant commented: ‘The schools were strict and good in the past. They were the best and offered proper training’. This view, which was widely shared by my Alexandrian research subjects, connected rigour and discipline as being of tremendous value, while the ‘ideal’ image of the educational system was complemented by the memory of the large number of schools, the large student population, the school buildings with their neoclassical architecture, the ‘pleasant’ school environment, and the many facilities provided.

However, this laudable situation started to deteriorate dramatically after the 1960s. The social and cultural changes that took place in Egypt at that time had a tremendous impact on the form, use and ownership of the Greek schools and

their buildings. By the late 1970s, the number of students had decreased significantly and by the 1980s most Greek schools had gradually closed. Most of the buildings that once housed the schools were sold to Copts, Egyptian institutions, or the Egyptian government; some were bought by the Greek state; while others remained the property of the *koinotita*, but with altered functions¹⁷⁹.

Today, as already mentioned, only two Greek community schools remain open in Alexandria. They have continued to operate without interruption, albeit with a tiny number of students who still follow the Greek curriculum and are instructed by teachers who are posted from Greece by the Greek Ministry of Education.

4.1 The main issues around the Greek School today

In the past few decades the issue of education has become a major concern for the leading members of the *koinotita*, and the Greek School is now the subject of many debates focusing on its low standards, its viability and its future¹⁸⁰.

The main source of worry appears to be related to demographic changes in the student population, since so few of the students are of strictly Greek origin. From the beginning of the 1990s, owing to the sharp decline in the number of Greek students, the *koinotita* decided to admit students from mixed marriages with Greek citizenship in order to keep the schools open. Initially, they were the children of Greeks and Copts, but later those from Greek and Muslim unions were allowed. As the documentary film *To Teleutaio Tetragono* (The Last Tetragono) suggests, the *koinotita* authorities and the teachers were already anxious about the future of the school, given the small number of students from purely Greek Alexandrian families. They also felt that the enrolment of students from mixed marriages 'was lowering the educational standards of the school', as Arabic was their mother tongue and the children's parents would be unable to help them with their homework¹⁸¹.

Since the late 2000s, a new preoccupation has arisen for the community leadership. A considerable number of Egyptian families who had lived in Greece and whose children had studied in Greek schools and had obtained Greek citizenship, decided to return to Egypt. The Greek school of Alexandria was obliged by law to accept and enrol those students, despite strong opposition from *koinotita* board members and many members of the community, especially those whose children attended the school. The *koinotita* board decided to set higher tuition fees for these children, a strategy that merely resulted in reducing the number of applicants. For their part, Egyptian parents prefer the Greek School because they consider it of a higher standard than Egyptian state schools, cheaper than most private schools in Alexandria and because a diploma from it guarantees their children admission to an Egyptian university¹⁸².



Figure 7. 11 High school students of the last three grades writing postcards for the exhibition

Another reason invoked to explain the current low standards prevailing at the school is the exclusive recruitment of teachers from Greece. From the 1930s onwards, most school teachers were essentially *Egyptiotes* who had studied at Greek universities and, upon returning to Egypt, were employed by the *koinotites* to work in the schools (Soulogiannis, 1999:90). After the 1970s, few of the teachers were *Egyptiotes*, most of them being *Elladites* posted by the Greek Ministry of Education and given a higher salary and bonuses they would not get in Greece. The Greek financial crisis has meant that since

2011 the Greek state has been unable to post the necessary number of teachers. Consequently, the community is burdened by the cost of hiring extra teaching staff from Greece¹⁸³. Today, the exclusive use of *Elladites* teachers has created many problems in the relations between the *koinotita* and the Association of Teachers (*Sillogos Didaskondon*). Many Alexandrians with whom I discussed this matter described them as ‘uncivilized’, blaming them for the School’s low standards and accusing them of being incompetent. A woman in her 50s who sends her children to the Greek School complained: ‘Teachers from Greece come here and look down on us. They think we are illiterate and that we walk with camels. They do not know our culture, they underestimate us and they think it’s their duty to civilize us. But they are peasants’.

Another common complaint is that the teachers are lazy, and that they are not interested in doing a proper job since their only reason for coming to Egypt is to take advantage of the higher salary and bonuses offered by the Greek state¹⁸⁴. As mentioned in the beginning of the thesis, the *Egyptiotes* who settled in Athens from the 1960s onwards considered themselves culturally superior, and found the mainland Greeks disturbingly different, ‘peasants’ and ‘uncivilized’. It seems that the Greeks who remained in Alexandria share those same sentiments even today¹⁸⁵. From the time I myself was at school I remember my parents warning me not to trust *Elladites* as they had no manners and didn’t know how to behave. Of all the *Elladites* who have come to live in Alexandria in the last few decades, teachers constitute the largest group. And since their role is not just to live as regular members of the Greek community, but to take the responsibility to educate the young Alexandrian children, they became a target.

One solution that a small number of parents (about ten) have resorted in order to cope with the ‘problem of Greek school standards’ has been to send their children to other foreign schools (German, American etc), which are private and attract wealthy Egyptians due to their high tuition fees. Greek parents who send their children to such schools either have their own business in Alexandria and believe their children will continue in the family firm, or they imagine their children having a future outside Egypt or Greece. What leads them to choose a

non-Greek school is, first, the opportunity to learn good Arabic,¹⁸⁶ which is necessary if someone is to live and work in Egypt, and second, the fact that the quality of education there is considered much higher. Nevertheless, this solution leaves open the question of how to preserve the Greek ethnic identity. Among the Greeks who sent their children to foreign schools was the president of the *koinotita*. His decision aroused a lot of criticism among community members because it seemed to symbolically negate his support for the preservation of Greek identity and the social dynamics of the community.

Regarding the future of graduates from the Greek School, it was always the case that because the curriculum was the same as that of Greece, admission to universities in the homeland was a matter of sitting the special entrance examinations. Those who could afford it continued their studies either in Greece or in other Western European countries, as Greek secondary level graduates seldom went on to Egyptian universities even before the 1960s. Gradually after the 1960s, convinced that there was no future in Egypt, more and more students left Egypt for universities in Greece and never returned. Today, the few students from Greek Alexandrian families, as well as some from mixed backgrounds, follow the same route: they enter Greek universities and never come back to Egypt. In the past 20 years, among those who consider themselves to be of purely Greek Alexandrian origin, it is estimated that only one student every three years attends an Egyptian university and remains in Alexandria usually to work in a family business or in a community association. For most Egyptian students with Greek citizenship (whose families returned to Egypt for financial reasons), or students from mixed marriages who cannot afford to travel to Greece, the choice of an Egyptian university seems to be the most appropriate solution, especially since they can more readily imagine their future in Egypt.

In one of my conversations with high-school students about their future, they told me that they are facing the following dilemma: on the one hand they don't want to stay in Alexandria, as it feels like 'living in a prison', and, on the other, Greece looks less attractive as an option because of the ongoing crisis. Nevertheless, they admit to feeling secure in Alexandria because it's familiar,

while Greece presents so many unknowns. As one student said, 'We've grown up differently here, we have a different mentality. I have more trust in people here. In Greece everyone cares only about themselves, while Egyptians are generally friendlier'.

4.2. Debates over the School's future

In the last few decades, the official Greek state, confronted with the problem of providing education in the Greek language to the Greek Diaspora, has started to promote the idea of an international educational model, which has already been implemented in some countries. The Greek state is currently thinking of adopting a bilingual (English-Greek or French-Greek) curriculum, where the Greek language and culture will be introduced as a second language into the curricula of diaspora schools¹⁸⁷. This new educational policy has initiated a discussion among *koinotita* board members who are striving to secure their children's future and identity, and it has divided them into two main opposing groups.

The few members of the emerging and some of the controlling generation are in favour of the idea of a bilingual international school and believe that the creation of such a school is the only solution, but under one condition: that the *koinotita* is given the role of the administrator. This effectively means that the *koinotita* would have the authority to decide on the curriculum, the teachers, the prospective students and so on. This group supports the view of the current *koinotita* president who believes that 'since we can't create any more Greeks, we should create *Philhellenes*¹⁸⁸'. They also maintain that the *koinotita* should be permitted to impose higher tuition fees for Egyptian students, which would generate important revenue for the *koinotita*. Moreover, many of them agree that such a school would eventually stop their children from living in a 'bubble', since they would meet Egyptians and widen their circle of friends. This attitude however conceals an aspect of class discrimination, since most of the supporters suggest that the school should admit only wealthy Egyptians, because, as one member said 'we don't want it to be swarming with *bowabs* (doorman in Arabic¹⁸⁹), as is the case today.'



Figure 7.12 View of the Averofeio High School, 2012 (by Billiris)

On the other hand, the declining generation and some members of the controlling generation, who hold most of the positions on the *koinotita* board, support the idea of preserving the purely Greek character of the school. Their opinion can be summed up in the following phrase: 'I would prefer to have a Greek school with just one student, rather than have Egyptians enrolled in it'. They also claim that it would be extremely dangerous to open the school up to Egyptian students, because that would pose a threat to the preservation of the Greek identity and would speed up the process of integration of Greek students into Egyptian culture, something, which their predecessors managed to avoid from the moment they settled in Egypt. Although the majority of the students today are of Egyptian or mixed Greek-Egyptian origin, the fact that all the teaching is strictly carried out in Greek and that all 80 students are Greek citizens has persuaded this group that the situation is under control.

The issue of future schooling is also related to space considerations since the prospect of a bilingual school creates the potential for Egyptianization of the *Elliniko Tetragono*. An active member of the *koinotita* expressed his fears as

follows: 'There is a danger that the Egyptian state will claim the *Elliniko Tetragono* as its own, if we allow Egyptian students to set foot on Greek soil'. To support his view, he presented the example of the Egyptian state's attempt to requisition the Benaki Orphanage in order to house its naval offices in the 1960s. This demand alarmed *koinotita* members, as the transfer of military affairs to the *Elliniko Tetragono* would definitely have given the Egyptians the right to take over the whole area in the future. This eventuality was avoided by the rapid thinking of the Consul and the *koinotita* board, who transferred the offices of the Greek Consulate to the Benaki Orphanage overnight and gave the Egyptians the building of the ex-Consulate in exchange. This story is remembered as 'the day we saved the *Elliniko Tetragono*'. However, despite the fears of losing this property expressed by many Greeks today, the Egyptians are not likely to make such claims.

As many Alexandrians have noted, during the post-Capitulation period (from 1937 onwards), a basic precondition if the Greeks wished to remain in Egypt was that they had to readjust their educational system to the new Egyptian reality. Some of the proposals aimed at modifying the curriculum to better serve the needs of the Greeks in Egypt included the introduction of technical courses along with the classical, and classes in Arabic, but such reforms were feasible only up to a certain degree (Ntalachanis:200-215). This was because, as we have seen, the Greek school system was actually designed to encourage and consolidate national feeling, to prevent the Greek population from being assimilated into Egyptian society, and to encourage the continuation of the Greek presence in Egypt¹⁹⁰.

Today, the ethnocentric education adopted by the purely Greek schools of Alexandria has led to a deadlock in the educational system. The prevailing attitude seems to be that if the school ceases to be 'purely Greek', then the reproduction of ethnic identity is seriously in danger. This point of view creates problems of its own and ignores certain serious issues. Among them is the imminent closing of the school, since the dwindling number of students will make it impossible to remain open longer (fig 7.12).



Figure 7.13 All school students, as boy scouts and girl guides participating in an event at the schools' amphitheatre, 2012

However, if keeping the school as it is, purely Greek (*amigos elliniko*), appears to be utopian and unrealistic, the bilingual option offered by an international school represents an imperfect emergency solution, given that this society has been founded on the principles of a Greek-centred perception of purity and superiority. Nevertheless, even if the future they are trying to build is not ideal even for the younger generation, they have been left with no other choice, since this is a matter of the community's survival (fig 7.13).

CHAPTER EIGHT: Conclusions

A community under pressure

The chapters of this thesis describe the social dynamics of the different generations of Greek Alexandrians in the life of the community and the ways in which these dynamics are related to shifting historical conditions and respond to critical events. The thesis also shows how my research participants' narratives highlight the past and the history of the community, how they remember, re-imagine and construct an account of a glorious past, which they seek to preserve by all means, becoming the 'guardians of Thermopylae' (as they refer to themselves). The research also revealed the significant ruptures and divisions frequently expressed in terms of how to interpret the past, with the younger Alexandrians not sharing the views of their elders. Although they recognize the older generations' views of the past, they are opposed to the ways in which this past is performed by the leading members of the community. Moreover, the divisions are deeper with regard to the question of what the future might, or should, bring.

The thesis also explores how Greek Alexandrians relate to and experience space, that is how the city itself is seen to be a product of history, thus creating claims for its ownership and thereby establishing its 'Greekness'. This is related to a pervasive sense of 'place loss' understood in terms of the Greek Alexandrians' relationships with Egypt and with Egyptians. The research tracked the creation of different kinds of borders and revealed how restriction to and isolation within the Greek areas sometimes described as a 'fish bowl' are willingly embraced, but also a source of frustration especially for the young. Finally, the thesis outlines the ways in which spatial and ideological boundaries are entangled and overlapping as concepts and experiences; they are drawn and redrawn, shifted, defended and worried over, among Greeks and other non-Greek inhabitants of the city.

These themes are central to the construction of Greek Alexandrian identity. Mercer observed that 'identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty' (1990: 43). The central issue currently confronting and troubling Greek Alexandrians is how to retain their 'unique' identity as they see everything around them changing, at a time of flux and transition. So the main questions that face them today are about how to keep their identity intact; what will happen to the new generations and what will they be like. Ultimately, the question is how to keep the community alive.

In the past, as discussed earlier, the Greeks of Alexandria worked hard to develop a secure and stable Greek identity, which was not threatened by assimilation with other ethnic groups of the city, nor with the Egyptians. But today the ethnic identity of the Greeks is thought of as weak and insecure. It is considered fragile and in need of protection. The visual and textual narratives produced in relation to the exhibition I organized with members of the community, particularly those relating the 'golden era' of the community, indicate the consistently large investments of the community and of its elite members in creating and sustaining institutional spaces (orphanages, schools, hospitals, etc.) and in providing a rich educational and leisure environment for community members in which to carry these out. Much of this investment in activities, especially with regard to children and young people, was specifically aimed at 'keeping the students from the streets and the coffee houses'.

The photographs collected for the exhibition, also reveal both the sheer presence of the Greek Alexandrian community and the traces of entanglement between Greek and Egyptian Alexandrians. Egypt and Egyptian men (and less frequently, women) appear to provide the backdrop to the events, to be almost invisibly present in supporting the success of public events, ceremonies, celebrations, and activities; we also see Ancient Egypt, for example in the costumes of carnival celebrations. But the invisible presence of Egyptians and of Egypt as the space within which Greek Alexandrians have built and continue to build their sense of place, has changed over time. The Egyptian flag has for many years taken its

place alongside the Greek flag in line with Egyptian national legislation, while the celebration of national identity is still very much focused on the events of Greek history. Arabic has been part of the school curriculum for many years, yet most students (apart from the Egyptian students and those with mixed ancestry) graduate with only a limited knowledge of the language. In contrast, their command of English and French is quite proficient at graduation, in addition to their fluency in Greek. These ambiguities, visibilities, and invisibilities continue to preoccupy the community, though now they do so with a sense of urgency that is new and pressing.

Anxieties related to the future of the community, have been articulated in the past on occasion, with varying levels of intensity. As mentioned earlier, one of the community events I organized at the *Enosi* was the screening of the documentary film *To Teleutaio Tetragono* (The Last Tetragono), which was produced in the late 1990s. The film showed members of the community expressing their concerns about the future of the community in the 1990s. This provoked a discussion among the audience, which consisted mainly of older members of the community, regarding current perceptions of the future of the community, and especially the future of the young. Unfortunately, very few of the latter attended the event so their voices were not heard. Most of the audience expressed the view that nothing interesting had occurred since the documentary was made. However, one of the seniors objected and listed a number of works that had taken place during this period. He particularly cited the conservation projects at the Greek cemetery, the restoration of two churches and various buildings in the *Elliniko Tetragono*. On the other hand, a representative of students from the Greek school, who had also watched the documentary, shared the wider view of the audience: 'The students in the 1990s were saying exactly what we are saying now, that we are bored, and that we have nothing to do and nowhere to go'.

The comment by the elderly Alexandrian conveyed his perception of time and progress. In his mind, change and progress were associated with the preservation of the past. However, the comments by those who saw no change -

as well as the student's remarks about his generation feeling the same boredom and futility as students in the 1990s - indicate a static perception of time where things remain unchanged and unchanging. This ties in with the metaphor used by a young man who said that the *koinotita's* members exist as frozen goods in the freezer. What is interesting is that, as we have seen, this community has already been through many changes which are perceived solely as evidence of decline and thus as not worthy of being reported, or as not being recognized as change.

In the course of the discussion after the screening, two crucial questions were posed regarding the future of the community. The first was, what kinds of incentives can be given to Greeks from the mainland to induce them to come to Alexandria and keep the community viable. In the past few decades (from the 1990s on), a number of initiatives were proposed to boost the Greek population in Alexandria. There was a certain degree of optimism regarding the creation of some institutions to be situated in the *Elliniko Tetragono*: a Greek university with postgraduate courses; a Greek Archaeological Institute; an orphanage, which would provide a home for orphans who would be sent over to Alexandria from Greece¹⁹¹. However, none of these initiatives materialized, due to bureaucratic and other practical obstacles. Other incentives had also been designed to encourage Greek businessmen to invest in Alexandria or to attract Greek employees. These too were thwarted by practical difficulties.

The second question they opened for discussion was closely related to the first: how to stop young people from leaving Alexandria. The situation is not very promising where jobs are concerned; wages in Egypt are generally very low and Greek Alexandrians do not readily work for Egyptians, apart from large organizations such as the Library of Alexandria and so on. Only people who have their own businesses in Alexandria have any hope of keeping their children in the city. In response to this question, a man in his early 30s, who was sitting at a table nearby, but did not join the public discussion, told me in private: 'I know how to keep young people here. They should bring wives for us from Greece because this is a real and practical problem'. His comment reflects Hirschon's

argument that 'among diaspora communities there is a concern to maintain identity in its 'pure' form together with control of marriage, which is a concern with marrying within the group'. This, according to the same author, 'reflects the centrality of kinship and identity and the underlying notion of blood, which is a metaphor for belonging very typical among Greeks' (Hirschon 1999:160). In the case of Greek Alexandrians, the issue of blood ties is not prominent in their narratives but the more broadly conceived matter of community boundaries is a frequent topic for discussion and reflection.

Greek Alexandrians tend to keep to themselves, excluding various 'others'. Dating with people from outside the community is not sanctioned and there are social pressures, which restrict the freedom of young people to form relationships with non-Greeks, and especially with Egyptians. According to Hirschon 'this in-group conduct. . . sets up social boundaries, thus reinforcing identity and even controlling social activity within the parameters of Greekness' (1999: 160). But these boundaries as mentioned before, have already been shifted. The older in age Alexandrians, feeling threatened by the increasing number of mixed marriages with Egyptians, keep repeating that 'in a few years we will not be able to find a 'proper' Greek'.

However, these marriages are more widely accepted if they involve rich Egyptians. This is because wealthy Egyptians are considered to be highly educated, since they have generally studied in foreign private schools, and to be more open-minded, because they have had the opportunity to travel abroad. They are also viewed as closer to Greeks in terms of class position and social status. As discussed in chapter seven, the children of wealthy Egyptians are definitely preferred as students at the Greek School. However, in the few cases where Greek Alexandrians have broken the rule of community endogamy and married European or 'western' partners, they are accorded a higher status than those who have married Egyptians and their children are considered equal members of the Alexandrian community. The same applies to people who married *Elladites*.

Although ambivalent attitudes towards Egyptians are typical among older and middle-aged Greeks, younger people, such as those in their late 30s or early 40s who have included Egyptians in their social circles (overtly or covertly) might also express contradictory views and feelings about them. For example, some told me that complications arise because of the Egyptians' conflicting and confused views. On the one hand, they want to feel more liberated and act like Westerners, and on the other, their culture which is directly linked to religion, keeps pulling them back. As a young man put it: 'It's like an elastic band, which is stretched to the limit and suddenly springs back again'. In another occasion, a Greek woman told me that Egyptians benefit most from the interaction between Greek and Egyptian Alexandrians. This opinion was also based on ambivalence, this time in relation to how Egyptians may perceived Greeks: 'Egyptians hang out with Greeks, either because they want to boost their social status (for prestige reasons), or because they consider foreign women 'easier' in comparison to Egyptian women'. Nevertheless, despite all the concerns and reflections regarding the Egyptians as 'others', what most of the recent pictures has showed is a sharing of space and activities. Alexandrians of all ages typically view Egyptians as naive but lovable and good-hearted people whom they wish to help in every possible way. Such images are resorted to when Greek Alexandrians are faced with criticism from *Elladites* for not being inclusive towards the local people. Indeed, Egyptians of the older generation also declare that Greeks and Egyptians have always loved each other and that Greeks have always been closer to them than other foreign groups, both emotionally and practically.

In view of the above, it becomes apparent that in the 21st century, Greek Alexandrians face a dilemma. They can either push their feelings of uniqueness aside and force themselves to interact with Egyptians, adopt some Egyptian customs and attitudes, open up the Greek School and perhaps other institutions to Egyptian Alexandrians, which is seen as eventually leading to assimilation into Egyptian society. Or they can refuse this opening up and instead focus on reinforcing the unity of the community and preserving their 'unique' identity, running the risk of distancing its members even further from the realities in which their everyday lives unfold, and make them appear in the eyes of some as

romantic dreamers lost in the past. There are no easy answers to these questions and the community members feel increasingly trapped. The community leaders are perched on the horns of this dilemma constantly wavering between one stance and another, unable to decide what would be the best way forward towards the future.

The thesis also aims to contribute to our current understanding of how visual material and particularly photography can provide insights for exploring the above themes and why it was useful to do so beyond traditional reliance on texts, interviews, or participant-observation. The advantage of organizing an exhibition in addition to the above methods is that it proved to be a good way to get a sense of what constitutes this particular community, what belonging to a community means, what role memory plays, and how different people and different generations respond to these sorts of temporalities. It was the collaborative process of collecting the material as much as the exhibition itself that provided the insights into how time, space and relationships are conceptualized and expressed. Reactions to other people's reactions helped me to capture this key relational aspect as well, that is the social dynamics that emerged in the process of making the exhibition.

Other aspects that the exhibition highlighted were the implications of changing technologies. As Tagg (1988:65) suggested, photos are not simply referential, they are 'things of their time'. Through the making of the exhibition it became evident that members of different generations used different media in order to represent the different contents of their story. The older members of the community brought photographs of the 'golden era', while the younger generation produced a video, which enabled them to show their own presence and their own voices in (and part of) the places they chose to highlight.

Organizing an exhibition on the history of the community turned out to be a fruitful way of accessing people's responses and furthering my understanding of what memory sources they had and recognized, valued, and wished to share as part of a collective story. Indeed, the selection of photographs that were

important for the Greek Alexandrians told a collective story. The kind of 'private' photos which were produced by Greek Alexandrians in response to the exhibition, were firmly located in the community (places, activities, institutions), and had a special significance as they suggested a 'cult of unity' that keeps the members of the community together even beyond the actual get-together (Bourdieu 1990:13-21). They implied the importance of the community in their lives, the entanglement of private and public, and the particular ways in which the 'community' (as an official entity) and its members make claims to a certain locality.



Figure 8.1 Bazaar of the Greek Women's Association at St. Savvas, 2012

The pictures also show another important difference within the community. Working through the official, and dominant, narrative about the Greek Alexandrian community, reveals a perspective articulated primarily by men, mainly the older men who represent the community and its institutions. When we shift attention from the textual and verbal narratives to examine the photographic record, a different presence is revealed, as women appear in large numbers and in different roles; from the many female residents in the old people's home, to women assisting in rituals and apparently supporting the

religious activities of the community (fig 8.1). There are still more photographs of women attesting to their presence at social events, including festivities and official meetings. Young women feature in photos taken at school, at events and commemorations and in the celebrations where they feature as dancers alongside young men. The gendered work within, and contours of the community and the muted presence of women within its official history thus become visible through the photographic record (Ardener 2006). Alternative stories emerge from my own photographs of community spaces and events, but also from the very photographic record provided as evidence of the official history of the golden era of the community.

The exhibition also showed that there were certain invisibilities in the story they wanted to present, which may point to the limitations of the strategy of focusing of the images that people put forward. The strategy of working through what the members of the community brought to me and made explicit about what represents the community and its past, highlighted certain features of the story, while minimising other important aspects. This became clear in relation to the 'silence' around Nasser's period, despite the significant implications of Nasser's regime for the Greek Alexandrian community; more recently, the momentous events of the 'Arab Spring' were recognized but not integrated into the story of the community. Other issues, widely discussed by community members, were not reflected in the images produced by community members. In particular, concerns about marriage between Greek Alexandrians and Egyptians did not emerge from the images produced for the exhibition. Arguably, these issues were represented in the film produced by the young people, where the students presented themselves as different and as inhabiting a complex, hybrid city-space. However, the negative reaction on the part of some older Greek Alexandrians attending the exhibition who dismissed the students as not real or proper members, exemplified the tensions and anxieties arising within certain sectors of the community concerning marriages outside of it, as well as the influx of non-Greek children in the schools and other Greek Alexandrian institutions or spaces.

The invisibilities uncovered by the juxtaposition of text and image raise a number of questions about the layered quality of narratives and representations, about the complexities of communities and identities. These might be understood more fully if approached precisely from the perspective of the invisibilized, the hybrid, the liminal or the marginal. More, and different trails and stories are offered up by this research, that can generate other perspectives, other views that draw their distinctiveness from a perspective derived from the margins (Hooks 1984).

Hammersley and Atkinson suggest that 'a reflexive awareness of ethnographic writing should also take into account the potential audience for the finished product' (1983:227). In my case it was the academic as well as the native context, which significantly affected the writing of my ethnography. The exhibition, as discussed above, was positively received by members of the community as representing its 'real' history. However, in my research the narratives and visual material collected, revealed aspects of the life of the community, especially their relationship with the Egyptians, that no one talks about outside the boundaries of the community. As some Alexandrians pointed out to me 'we know the reality, but we keep it between us'. Therefore my position was quite awkward, both during the writing process as I considered how to write that which they did not want to say, as well as now that I have finished, thinking about how they will receive my thesis in the future.

The fact that I am aware of the reluctance of many Alexandrians to accept the positions of anyone trying, according to themselves, to 'destroy the good image of the community' makes my position even more difficult. Two months before I submitted my thesis, an exceptional book on the history of the Greeks of Egypt up to 1960 by a non-*Egyptiotis* historian was launched. The reaction of the *Egyptiotes* living in Athens, who were negatively predisposed when they attended the book launch (for example, they were bothered by what they thought of as the author's underestimation of the size of the Greek community in the past and his assertion that the Greek exodus had begun before Nasser came to power), created a very tense atmosphere. In the end, the president of the

association of Athenian *Egyptiotes* (SEE) publicly declared that ‘the association’s doors are closed for this particular historian’. Greek residents of Alexandria had a similar reaction. Among the many epithets hurled at him, he was also called a communist for revealing the left-wing views of some Alexandrians. For most anthropologists who do not carry out research ‘at home’, post-fieldwork contact may consist of sporadic correspondence with a few research participants, while for me interaction with Alexandrians is a life-long engagement. Therefore, despite consultation and collaboration with my research participants, I do have some deep concerns regarding the ways my thesis may be received in the future by different members of the community, both in Alexandria and in Athens.

Three years after completing my fieldwork I returned to Alexandria. On this visit I noted major changes in the community. Not only had the emerging generation taken over the *koinotita* board, but also its new president was a Greek Alexandrian who was married to an Egyptian woman. This change suggests that my fieldwork was conducted at a very critical moment in the life of the community, and probably marks a threshold towards a new direction that the community will take in the future.

Although the exhibition started out as a project that aimed to serve the needs of my research and the plan was for the exhibits to be on display for just a month, the exhibition was still in place when I revisited the city. Not only had none of the exhibits been removed but also the *koinotita* members and the new Consul had used the exhibition space as a venue for important events. During my visit, the Greek Consul, who I was informed had been fascinated by this exhibition, asked to meet me. During our conversation he told me that ‘this exhibition will not be removed because this is all I have got to show about the community to people who come from Greece¹⁹², especially to officials.’ After this meeting, I visited the *koinotita* where I encountered the same enthusiasm from the members of the board who asked me to give them some photographs from the exhibition in electronic form to use them in a video for their website which they intend to call: ‘Gazing towards the future’. One of the members said, ‘Did you know that your exhibition has become timeless?’ Those reactions, *a posteriori*, show clearly the

deep concern people have for their own identity. While the exhibition started as a project that no one understood (neither the officials nor the community members), after a few years, it became a site of memory for all; a point of reference, a visual representation of the history of the community; something to show and tell 'this is we are'. Thus, the exhibition contributed to producing the very discourse it was intended to investigate. The exhibition stands as a fixed representation of the community but no doubt will have variable and unpredictable outcomes and effects.

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ENDNOTES

Chapter 1

¹ The Egyptian revolution of 2011, locally known as the January 25 Revolution, began on 25 January 2011 and took place across all of Egypt. It consisted of demonstrations, marches, occupations of plazas, riots and strikes that took place mainly in Cairo and Alexandria. Social media (Facebook, Twitter, You Tube) were used extensively. Protesters were from different socio-economic and religious backgrounds and at least 846 people were killed. For further information and related literature see Chapter three.

² The Greek word *koinotita* meaning 'community' will be used throughout my thesis to describe the community as an official entity. This, as well as other Greek words, which will be used, are presented and translated in the GLOSSARY at the end of my thesis.

³ According to Hanley, 'historians of the Middle East treat the cities as composites of several discrete communities – Greek, Jewish, Turkish, Arab, French, and so on – each pursuing its own interests, in its own sector of the economy, living in its own quarter of the city. Class difference, in these accounts, is subordinate to ethnic and sectarian difference, so Jewish dock workers belong to the same category as Jewish bankers, and in a different section from lower-class workers of other communities' (2008:1349).

⁴ *Annuaire*, 1927-28, cited in Kitroeff, 1983, pp 15-19. The author states that this figure is not accurate, as it underestimates the actual numbers of Greeks, many of whom were registered as 'nationals' of Egypt, or of another country.

⁵ The so-called Egyptian revolution of 1952 also known as the July 23 *coup d'etat*, was started on July 23, 1952 by the Free Officers Movement, a group of army officers led by Muhammad Naguib (the first President of Egypt) and Gamal Abdel Nasser (the second President serving from 1956 until his death). The coup was initially aimed at overthrowing King Farouk's monarchy, but the movement had more political ambitions, and soon moved to abolish the constitutional monarchy and aristocracy of Egypt and Sudan, establish a republic, and end the British occupation of the country. Although Greeks were not directly affected by the revolution itself, but by the reforms that Nasser gradually introduced culminating in the nationalization laws of the early 1960s, throughout my thesis I use the Egyptian revolution of 1952 as the crucial historical moment that led to Egypt's major transformation and to the Greek community's decline.

⁶ The term 'decline' is used here to indicate the population decline of the Greeks and the consequent reduction of their activities in economic and other areas. The term is used by the official historian of the community, Soulogiannis (1999: 267-274), but also by the residents themselves.

⁷ There are no official records of the exact number of the Greeks who lived in Alexandria in 2011-2012. This is an estimated figure given by the *koinotita* and the Consulate General of Greece.

⁸ The island of Crete since the beginning of the second millennium BC was already engaged in trade with Egypt. For more see, Warren, P. M. (1995). 'Minoan Crete and Pharaonic Egypt, in W. V. Davies and L. Schofield (eds), *Egypt, the Aegean and the Levant. Interconnections in the Second Millennium BC*. (pp. 1 - 18). British Museum Press.

⁹ I argue that their 'cultural capital' derives from the multicultural characteristics they have inherited from the pre-Nasser period (exposure to other ethnic, religious, national groups, knowledge of several languages, etc), but also from the Greek educational system, which they regarded as of a 'high standard'.

¹⁰ In the Greek Alexandrian context today, the terms 'pure' or 'authentic' Greeks refer to genealogy. These terms are used by the Greek Alexandrians to refer to a person whose parents and grandparents are of Greek origin. Having Greek citizenship, or speaking the Greek language is not enough to make you 'pure' or 'authentic' Greek. The discourse on the 'pure' Greek

Alexandrian identity became very prominent over the past few decades when mixed marriages between Greeks and Egyptians first started to take place.

¹¹ See glossary

¹² The high stone wall was erected two years after the Egyptian revolution of 2011. Although the Greek community did not face any particular problems during the revolution, the *koinotita* decided to build the wall for extra safety.

¹³ This stereotype was partly reinforced by the narratives of several Egyptian Greeks who resided in Greece, and often exaggerated the real social, educational and financial status they enjoyed in Egypt (my fieldwork data).

¹⁴ The Greeks, Italians, Maltese and other non-Egyptian minority groups, namely the Jews, Syrians and Armenians, whose presence before the 19th century was connected to the Ottoman *millets* (see endnote 44), were collectively known as *mutamassirun*, literally the 'Egyptianized.' The *mutamassirun* were not Egyptians but rather 'Egyptianized', because 'they recognized both an affinity and conformity with the Egyptian way of life and yet, at the same time, [maintained] a certain detachment from it'. The term was used to distinguish them from the British, French and other Europeans who had no contact with the Egyptians.

¹⁵ The irony is that the origins of the word *Egyptiotis* from the Egyptian word *mutamassirun* (Egyptianized), would displease the *Egyptiotes* today, as they consider the word Egyptianized to be synonymous with decadence. In their views, to be Egyptianized means to have lost your Greek identity by allowing yourself to be assimilated into the Egyptian way of life.

¹⁶ Many Greeks from the mainland, particularly during the first years of the '*Egyptiotes* settlement in Greece, addressed them as 'Egyptians', a false term which implied Egyptian origin; and which the new arrivals found extremely insulting. Others called them 'Greco-Egyptians' (*Ellino-Egyptioi*), by simply applying the term of address used for other diasporic communities, especially the Greeks of America (*Ellino-Americanoi*). This was again a term to which they reacted negatively since, to them, it implied mixed origin.

¹⁷ During the period 2004-2007, I conducted some 80 interviews with Greek Alexandrians who live in Athens. Archives of the Alex-Med, of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina.

¹⁸ This notion was heavily influenced also by the fragmented and exclusive use of archive material of the Greek *koinotita* of Alexandria.

¹⁹ The *Sindesmos Egyptioton Ellinon* (Association of Greek Egyptiotes) in Athens hosts events by members of the different communities who once lived in Egypt (Port-Said, Cairo, Alexandria, Suez etc)

²⁰ In the 20th century Greece was economically, spatially, and socially devastated by the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), the 1st World War (1914-1918), the Asia Minor Catastrophe (1922), the 2nd World War (1939-1945), the Greek Civil War (1946-1949), and later, the military dictatorship (1967-1974).

²¹ Kirtsoglou and Theodossopoulos, who studied Asia Minor refugees from Mистри, argue that although the Mистриotes came from a very poor place in Asia Minor, they too found the mainland Greeks disturbingly different and sometimes 'primitive'. According to them, the sense of superiority of the Mистриotes derived to a certain degree from their claim of belonging to the 'commercial and cultural orbit of Constantinople' (2001: 405-408). For more see also Salamone and Stanton (1986) and Hirschon (1998).

²² Greeks from the mainland or the islands were frequently referred to by the *Egyptiotes* as *choriates*, meaning peasants.

²³ Interviews with Greek Alexandrians in Athens. Bibliotheca Alexandrina archives.

²⁴ Peter Loizos (1981; 1991; 2007) inspired my research not only through his contribution to the anthropology of the Greek-speaking Mediterranean, but also because, although he was raised and educated abroad, he decided to conduct ethnographic field-research in Cyprus (his parental home country), attempting to place his family's village (Greek-speaking and Orthodox,) in a national context. Moreover, he acknowledged that his special links allowed him 'privileged

access' to a normally reticent community, and allowed him to carry out fieldwork in more comfortable surroundings than those of many of his colleagues.

²⁵ Many anthropologists suggest that there are also logical dangers inherent in the insider's and outsider's approaches, while others critique this dichotomy (Messerschmidt 1981; Aguilar 1981. Narayan 1993, who argues against the fixity of the distinction between insider/outsider, suggests that, 'the issue of who is an insider and who is an outsider is secondary to the need for dismantling objective distance to acknowledge our shared presence in the cultural worlds that we describe'. Michael Jackson (1989) calls it 'radical empiricism: a methodology and discursive style that emphasizes the subject's experience and involvement with others in the construction of Knowledge'.

²⁶ Aguilar suggests that, 'such dangers can be mitigated with relative ease once one is aware of them' (1981:23).

Chapter 2

²⁷ They argue that this was facilitated by the participation of Greek anthropologists who, trained mostly in Europe and the United States, could be considered to have had an 'in-between' identity.

²⁸ Greek ethnography raised issues of gender way before the 1980s. Some of these earlier works are: Denich, 1974; Dubisch, 1974; Hirschon, 1978 etc

²⁹ For anthropology of Greece the edited volume of Papataxiarchis and Loizos set a new agenda.

³⁰ However, although gender distinctions relate not only to marriage and reproduction, for practical reasons it doesn't have a predominant place in my thesis.

³¹ Low, in her ethnographic work (2000), provides examples of how colonial power relationships are materialized by examining the impact of the Spanish colonial system of spatial organization on the Latin American grid plan town and plaza and stresses the importance of the social use of some spaces, and their associated symbolic meanings.

³² Related literature is Steven Hoelsher's (2008) article on "angels of memory" in Guatemala City. Also Emilia Palonen's (2008) account of street renaming as a removal of memorials in the city of post-communist Budapest. The later uses the notion of 'city-text' to explore the relation between politics of national identity and city's memorial landscape.

³³ *Enosi* (Union), which is how the Greeks call the AEEA (*Athlitiki Enosi Ellinon Alexandrias*) the (Athletic Association of Greeks of Alexandria), is located in the *Elliniko Tetragono*. Today it has become the main space for social transactions and meetings among Greeks. See glossary.

³⁴ Alexandrians have collected and preserved photographs of various events since the 19th century, as well as objects, documents, books, magazines, audio and films. Additionally, they have constructed and preserved a number of historical landmark buildings (one of which is the Averofeio school) and architectural constructions in the urban centre of the city of Alexandria, that is, urban territories of various scales. All the above have changed (in regards to their form, use and symbolic values) following the community's changes through time and under the influence of major political and economic forces.

³⁵ Young people in their 30s-40s created their own mental maps of the city, which are presented in Appendix II. The school students collaborated in the making of a short experimental film, which is included in the attached DVD and will be discussed in chapter four and six. School students also participated in another project, the writing of some postcards. For more on the method of postcards see footnote 97.

Chapter 3

³⁶ Early attempts to define terms such as 'diaspora', 'community' and '*paroikia*' may be found in Chasiotis book, *Episkopi tis Ellinikis Diasporas*, Thessaloniki, 1993, pp. 20-21

³⁷ In English, the term used to describe a group of people living in a colonial area consisting of the original settlers or their descendants and a group of people of one nationality or ethnicity living in a foreign place is the same: colony. In the Greek language, on the other hand, there is a word for each case: the term *apoikia* [αποικία] for the former and the term *paroikia* [παροικία] for the latter. The term *paroikia* is in use in the current English and French historiography.

³⁸ Egypt was conquered by the Ottoman Turks in 1517, and became a province of the Ottoman Empire.

³⁹ Egypt was invaded by the French forces of Napoleon I in 1798. In 1805 the French were expelled by Mohammed Ali Pasha, who established a dynasty that ruled until 1952. In 1914 Egypt was declared a British protectorate and the British military presence lasted until 1954 (Goldschmidt 2004).

⁴⁰ On June 18, 1953 Egypt was officially declared the Arab Republic of Egypt. Nasser assumed power as president in June 1956 and nationalized the Suez Canal on 26 July 1956.

⁴¹ Mohammed Ali, who was born in Kavala in Greece, maintained a strong connection with some Greek merchants and encouraged their settlement in Alexandria.

⁴² The Capitulations (*Imtiyazat* in Arabic) were bilateral agreements between the Ottoman Empire and single countries, providing rights and privileges which regulated the status of nationals of these countries within the territory of the Ottoman Empire. Greece, as a new state, was the last country to sign the Capitulations in 1855. The Capitulations system guaranteed foreign merchants freedom of trade, exemption from taxation, and trials in consular courts.

⁴³ Greeks arrived in Egypt from many different regions of the Balkan Peninsula, Asia Minor, the islands of the Aegean and the Ionian seas. The migration movement coincided chronologically with Greece's independence and the expansion of the territorial sovereignty of the Greek state at the expense of the Ottoman Empire and hence not all ethnic Greeks had Greek citizenship when they arrived in Egypt.

⁴⁴ *Millet* was a religious community in the Ottoman Empire recognized by the Sultan and organized with limited autonomy under a religious or secular figure who was responsible for the community's duties vis-s-vis the authorities. At the end of 19th century there were a total of 14 *millet*s. Besides the Muslim *millet*, the main ones were the Greek *millet-i Rûm*, the Armenian, the Jewish and the Syrian Orthodox. The Greek Orthodox *millet*, or *millet-i Rûm* included not only ethnic Greeks but all the Orthodox believers in the Balkans and the Middle East. Ethnic Greeks accounted for 16-35 per cent of the Greek Orthodox *millet* in Egypt at that time. For more on the term *millet*, see P. Konortas, *Ottoman Views on the Ecumenical Patriarchate, 17th-early 20th centuries* (Athens 1998), 303; B. Braude, 'Foundation Myth of the Millet System', in B. Braude and B. Lewis (eds), *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, vol.1 (London 1982), 73.

⁴⁵ The term diaspora derives from the Greek word *diasporein* (dispersion or scattering) and was initially used to describe the dispersion of the Jews since ancient times. For a broader discussion on the use of the term *diaspora*, see Armstrong (1976); Safran (1991:83-99); Brubaker (2005).

⁴⁶ Lina Ventouras (2009) sees the Greek diaspora as a subdivision of the *homogeneia* (its members being called *homogeneis*) since the term diaspora presupposes that its members or their ancestors migrated from the same homeland, namely Greece. *Homogeneia* constitutes a broader category because it includes not only the members of a diaspora but the members of ethnic Greek minorities in foreign countries who themselves or their ancestors have never lived in the Greek territory.

⁴⁷ These questions however exceed the limits of my research.

⁴⁸ Halim argues that cosmopolitan Alexandria was a colonial imposition; one that lived by the 'invented tradition' that it was heir to Hellenistic Alexandria. According to her view, Alexandria from its founding was to follow the order of a cosmopolis: a dwelling place of people, of different tongues, and from different countries. However, cosmopolitan as an epithet became firmly

associated with Alexandria only in the middle of the 19th century – spanning a hundred years, 1860-1960 – and it was a Eurocentric cosmopolitanism, which could be read as a subtext of colonialism (Halim 2013).

⁴⁹ In order to describe and define different aspects of the integration process, the academic community has employed a plethora of terms, such as: ‘adjustment’, ‘assimilation’, ‘integration’, ‘acculturation’ and ‘absorption’. While some of these terms overlap, others define stages of a process that leads to the complete absorption of an immigrant community into the host country.

⁵⁰ Even though the issue of religion is viewed as a limiting (or prohibitive) factor for the Greeks with regards to relationships between Christian-Greek and Egyptian Muslims, another aspect, which is usually buried, is the refusal of many Muslims to marry Christian women. This is a problem which the young women of the community have encountered in the last decade. They usually have secret relationships with Egyptian Muslims and they often have to face disapproval from their partner’s family for religious reasons. As a result, those relationships fail to end in marriage and Egyptians are held responsible for this.

⁵¹ According to the *Koran* Muslims are obliged to perform five *Salats* (Prayers) at specific times during the day and night, they fast all day during the month of *Ramadan*, they don’t drink alcohol, they don’t eat pork, they may have up to four wives, they are not allowed to have sex before marriage, etc. Most Muslim women wear the *hijab* (head covering), they are not allowed to wear tight or transparent clothing, clothes that expose those parts of the body which are considered sexually attractive, etc.

⁵² Some indicators of Alexandria’s growth: 1882:232,636, 1907:353,807, 1927:573,003 (sources: *Annuaire*, 1910, 1914; Population census, 1927).

⁵³ The most important names among these merchants were those of the Tositsas brothers, Zizinia, Anastassy. The most prominent of these merchants, M. Tositsas, became the first Greek consul in Alexandria (1833-54)

⁵⁴ The first official census of 1897 indicated that 15,182 Greeks were resident in Alexandria. In 1937 there were 36,882 Greek nationals (cited in Trimi, K. and Yanakakis, I., 1997, p 67).

⁵⁵ During the first half of the 19th century the wealth of the Alexandrian merchants gave the community great economic importance. During the second half of the 19th century the Greek community expanded as a new generation of a more Anglophile Greek merchants emerged. They were exclusively involved in the cotton trade and they owed their economic prosperity to their connections with European financial capitals. These merchants were able to generate great profits from Egypt’s cotton trade and became not only the wealthiest people in the Greek community of Alexandria but also among the wealthiest in the country (Kitroeff, 1983)

⁵⁶ During the 19th and 20th century Greek *koinotites* were operating in 25 different Egyptian cities. The most important among them were the *koinotites* of Alexandria (1843), Cairo (1856), Mansoura (1860), Port Said (1865) and Suez (1888).

⁵⁷ The *koinotita* constituted a legal entity under Greek private law, established with the approval of the Greek state, run under the surveillance of the Consulate General and recognized by the Egyptian government.

⁵⁸ In the year 1941 to 1942, the GKA had 6 churches, 3 cemeteries, 1 hospital, profitable farms, schools, charity institutions, and real estate properties, which covered an area of approximately 16,000 square metres in Alexandria from which they also made a profit. Part of the property, an area of 11,000 square metres in the centre of the city, has remained under its ownership until today (Soulogiannis 2005:100-101).

⁵⁹ The Greek *koinotita* of Alexandria (GKA) was not the only one in the city. In the suburbs of *Ramleh*, *Ibrahimia* and *Abu Qir* (Aboukir), where many Greeks resided, there were also smaller Greek *koinotites*, which later (after the 60s) merged with the GKA.

⁶⁰ The *koinotites* of the Ottoman Empire were those in Asia Minor, the Pontos etc. The *koinotites* of Egypt resemble the Western European model of the Greek *koinotites* of Venice, Vienna, Trieste etc.

⁶¹ For the history of the Patriarchate of Alexandria, see Soulogiannis, E. (2011), 'Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria, contribution to its history'. Proceedings of conferences of the years 2009 and 2010, *H simboli ton Aravon sti diadosi tis Archaïas Ellinikis Gramateias* (The contribution of Arabs in the dissemination of ancient Greek Literature) (ed) Kourkouvelis, N., Publisher: Friends of the Library of Alexandria.

⁶² He holds the historical title 'His Divine Beatitude the Pope and Patriarch of the Great City of Alexandria, Libya, Pentapolis, Ethiopia, All Egypt and All Africa, Father of Fathers, Pastor of Pastors, Prelate of Prelates, the Thirteenth of the Apostles and Judge of the Universe'.

⁶³ According to tradition the Apostle and Evangelist Mark is considered to be the Founder and first Bishop of the Alexandrian Church in the 1st century A.D. See official website of the patriarchate, <http://www.patriarchateofalexandria.com/>

⁶⁴ The term Greek Orthodox in the existing Patriarchates came into being around the same time as the creation of the Greek state. The five traditional Patriarchates fell under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where they still remain, having been assigned to a particular department within the Ministry, which is responsible for all ecclesiastical affairs abroad. The protection of the Greekness of the Patriarchates gradually became a key point in the foreign policy agenda of the Greek state, which wished to protect the areas that were formerly Greek. The state and the Patriarchates maintain close ties, since the former has the authority to appoint, officials and intervenes to resolve any administrative issues that may arise. However, all Patriarchates are legal entities that are subject to the laws of their respective host country (Egyptian law in the case of Alexandria). Apart from the Patriarchate of Antioch, all the other Patriarchates use Greek as their official language as a means of preserving tradition and because all sacred texts are written in Greek. In addition, tradition dictates that the members of the clergy complete their academic education in Greece, whereas the Greek state appoints seconded officials from Greece to the Patriarchates, including the one in Alexandria (interview with a bishop of the Patriarchate of Alexandria).

⁶⁵ There is only one church in Alexandria where Arabic language is used in the liturgy for the Arabic-speaking Greek Orthodox Christians of the city.

⁶⁶ Of the five traditional patriarchates, only the patriarchate of Antioch has lost its Greek character and become Arabophone.

⁶⁷ The Patriarchate throughout the 19th and 20th century was not entitled to intervene in educational matters involving the community schools, which often led to conflicts between the two institutions. The Patriarchate could interfere only where religion as a subject was concerned (usually to complain that the hours allotted for its teaching were far reduced in comparison to other subjects in the Greek curriculum) and regarding pupils' church attendance, about which it complained of 'a very loose commitment' (Lekkou 2001: 257).

⁶⁸ Consulates and vice-consulates were also operating in other Greek communities in Egypt. The National Delegation in Egypt was situated in Alexandria until 1900, when as a Diplomatic Agent (Embassy) it was transferred to Cairo. There was also a Consular Court in operation at the General Consulate of Alexandria from the application of the Capitulations in 1876 until their elimination at the end of 1949. While the Consulate was always closer to local issues of the community, bilateral relations, contacts and policies between the two countries were coordinated by the Greek Embassy in Cairo, which is still responsible for transnational issues (Soulogianis 1999:38-40).

⁶⁹ M. Tositsas, who was the first consul of Alexandria, was also appointed as the first president of the *koinotita* (GKA). Since then, all consuls are automatically honorary presidents of the *koinotita*.

⁷⁰ The relations of the *koinotita* with the Egyptian state are described by Soulogiannis as good

with some ups and downs. However, he points out that the benefactors to Greek institutions, the wealthy Greeks of the community, helped the Greeks of both Egypt and Greece, but not the Egyptians although he does mention a few cases in which financial aid was offered to Egyptians, mainly during the 1950s (2005: 293-297).

⁷¹ For a full list of the donations and the financial aid granted to Greece up to 1960, see (Soulogiannis 2005: 278-284)

⁷² There is a wide range of terms in use in the literature to describe the departure of the Greeks from Egypt (exodus, flight, purge, expulsion etc). For issues of terminology, see S. Chrysosostomidis (2002;2009)

⁷³ He takes into account the general historical context of a post-Capitulations Egypt, the Second World War, the creation of the state of Israel, the Cold War and decolonization.

⁷⁴ The term 'repatriation', as Ntalachanis (2015) rightly states, is not accurate as the majority of *Egyptiotes* had never lived in Greece before.

⁷⁵ Ntalachanis (2015), however, argues that the social and economic profile of Greeks at the time of departure in the 1950s and 1960s remains unknown, as no detailed study exists concerning the socio-economical profile of the community from 1937 onwards (pp. 344-355).

⁷⁶ Namely doctors, pharmacists, dentists, chemists, civil engineers and architects, owners of bars and restaurants, cinemas, printing houses, shop keepers, etc.

⁷⁷ The decline in financial contributions from the *koinotita* members and other factors had as a result a reduction in the financial capital of the GKA and an increase in its payment obligations and expenses, while its deficit has grown since 1969. In the 1960s, the Greek state increased its financial aid to the GKA and continued to provide it on a regular basis up to 1980, when it stopped (Soulogiannis 2005: 262-63).

⁷⁸ The Greek Alexandrian journalist K. Koutsoumis in his article, *Pos kai diati dielithei I paroikia tis Egyptou (how and why the paroikia in Egypt was dissolved)*, cites a State Department, Eastern section, report of 1964, which mentions that the number of Greeks in Alexandria that year was around 8,000 (source cited in Soulogiannis: 1999, pp. 254-55).

⁷⁹ The asset management of the community (farms and urban real estate) was a difficult task which became even more challenging after the GKA incorporated smaller *koinoties* and unions that had been dissolved after ceasing to operate..

⁸⁰ After 1952, new Egyptian legislation started to negatively affect all foreigners. At first, the 'residence law' was enacted, which required non-Egyptian nationals who were born in Egypt to have a residence permit which they would have to renew every year; later on, they would be eligible to receive a 5-year and 10-year residence permit. Then the 'labour laws' were enacted, followed by the 'laws of Egyptianization' (Soulogiannis 2005: 304-305).

⁸¹ In 1963-64, the Greek state, with consecutive decrees, registered all Egyptian Greeks in the Social Security System (IKA) and recognized their years of employment in Egypt.

⁸² For more details on the issue of recruiting teachers from Greece see chapter seven pp 211-12.

⁸³ Although Mubarak's open economy served the interests of the Greeks of Alexandria, his policies, especially in the last two decades of his regime, resulted in a financial crisis that changed the socio-economic landscape of the country. Soliman (2011), in his book *The Autumn of Dictatorship: Fiscal Crisis and Political Change in Egypt under Mubarak*, argues that over the last 30 years, the Egyptian state has increasingly given its citizens less money and fewer social benefits while simultaneously demanding more taxes and resources. This led to a weakened state – deteriorating public services, low levels of law enforcement, poor opportunities for employment and economic development – while simultaneously inflating the security machine that sustained the authoritarian regime.

⁸⁴ From 1991 onwards, it became much easier to make investments abroad, with regard to buying and selling real estate, while the renting of office or business spaces became independent of the previous laws. See Soulogiannis, 1999, p. 260.

⁸⁵ For further reading on the Egyptian revolution of 2011, see also Rutherford, B. K. (2008). *Egypt after Mubarak: Liberalism, Islam, and Democracy in the Arab World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press; El-Mahdi R. and Marfleet, P., eds. (2009). *Egypt: The Moment of Change*. London: Zed; Moaddel, M. (2012). *The Arab Spring and Egyptian Revolution Makers: Predictors of Participation*, Population Studies Center Research Report 12-775. Eastern Michigan University; Korany B. and El Mahdi, R. (ed.) 2012. *The Arab Spring in Egypt: Revolution and Beyond*. Cairo: The American University of Cairo Press.

Also see the e-sources: [Timeline: Transition in Egypt](#). Key events leading up to the first presidential election since the ouster of President Hosni Mubarak and subsequent developments as provided by the [Washington Post](#); [Egypt Elections: Key Events Timeline In Egyptian Uprising And Transition](#) as provided by [Agence France-Presse](#); [Egypt's revolution: Interactive map](#) as provided by [BBC News Middle East](#); ["Hosni Mubarak resigns as president". "Sisi elected Egypt president by landslide". Al Jazeera](#). 30 May 2014. Retrieved 9 January 2015; ["How did Egypt become so corrupt? – Inside Story". Al Jazeera](#). Archived from the original on 9 February 2011. Retrieved 9 February 2011; ["Egypt: A List of Demands from Tahrir Square". Global Voices](#). 10 February 2011.

⁸⁶ There was fear among the Greeks about the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. However, the Egyptian Christians (Copts) were facing a greater danger due to the pre-existing animosity between them and the Muslims (Ethnographic data)

⁸⁷ One last group which I'm not including in the modern community is the Alexandrians who left the city during the 1960s, who own no property there, maintain no ties with the Greek community, although they do enjoy visiting the city.

⁸⁸ The Alexandria Centre for Hellenistic Studies was established by the Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation in cooperation with the Vardinoyannis Foundation and the Library of Alexandria. The aim is to promote Greek culture abroad. The centre operates the following academic departments: History, Philosophy, Literature and Fine Arts. At present, the only Greeks who have studied or worked there are five or six students and one professor all from Greece (*Elladites*). The center works in collaboration with the Library of Alexandria for the purpose of granting diplomas and degrees at the Master's and PhD levels.

⁸⁹ Etymologically it doesn't mean the negro, but the Arab.

⁹⁰ What is interesting, is that the children of mixed marriages are never referred to as Greeks, not even as half-Greek/half-Egyptian, but as *Arapakia* (Arab children). They are assigned an Egyptian identity and their behaviour is described as Egyptian. Even if they attend the Greek School, they are looked down on, because they are considered to be perfectly integrated into Egyptian, rather than Greek society, with Egyptian values; in other words they are effectively 'Egyptianized'.

⁹¹ However, Douglas points out that something that is 'out of place' does not necessarily have to be solely destructive or dangerous; It also has the potential to become creative. At any moment something different can happen, requiring a different stance. This observation encapsulates the possibilities envisaged by community members, and whereas the older generations are more likely to choose a negative understanding of such liminalities, the younger generations may respond positively to the opportunities that may open up for them.

⁹² Many of them never got married and stayed home to take care of their elderly parents.

⁹³ 'The Hellenic Scientific Association 'Ptolemy I', also known as *Ptolemaios*, is the only active scientific association in Alexandria today.

Chapter 4

⁹⁵ Clifford (2004: 18–19) provides an important set of considerations in evaluating the 'success' of collaborations involving museums and indigenous communities. McMullen (2008:56), underscores the need for more critical analyses of the collaborative process and argues that

discussions of collaborations often take the form of ‘warm and fuzzy descriptions of the museum’s attempts to be inclusive, the resulting exhibit’s success, the celebratory nature of the exhibit opening and community members’ pride at the outcome’. Also, Claire Bishop (2012), who explores the history of participatory and socially engaged art, sets out to reveal the uncritical and ahistorical assumptions involved in the rhetoric to align participation in art with democratic participation.

⁹⁶ For a discussion of the relations to Egyptians see chapter seven.

⁹⁷ Visual Representations of the history of the Greek Alexandrians: a) in 1985, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Averofeio High School various events were organized in Alexandria, such as: speeches, photography and archival exhibitions, which were then collected and published in a special anniversary edition. b) In 1990, on behalf of the Greek *Koinotita* of Alexandria (GKA) and the Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive (E.L.I.A.), a big exhibition was organized at the Cultural Centre of the Athens Municipality, which encompassed a large amount of archival material on the activities of GKA; later, a catalogue of this exhibition was also published. c) In 1993, a new exhibition took place at the building of E.L.I.A. in Athens, which presented documents, photographs and printed materials, all related to the life of GKA. See the annual reports of EKA 1984, pp 22-23; 1985, p. 17; 1990, p. 23. See also: *Averofeio High School: 100 years on*, Athens-Alexandria, 1985 and *The Senior Greek Community of Alexandria*, Cultural Centre of the Municipality of Athens, 1990.

⁹⁸ These letters, in the form of postcards, were written by the students of the High School as part of my participatory methodology. Students were asked to write a letter to a friend in Greece describing their lives in Alexandria and then to discuss their texts. After the discussion we decided to present these letters at the exhibition. However, although the letters worked well for me as ethnographic data, as exhibits they had no appeal for the visitors (who could not be bothered to read most of the written texts). For this reason I have not analyzed them in relation to the exhibition.

Chapter 5

⁹⁹ Interview by Katia Tsiblaki at CNN Greece, 20 March 2016.

Source: <http://www.cnn.gr/premium/story/25765/oi-ellines-tis-aigyptoy-poy-fylane-thermopyles#ixzz43Uaw8qad>.

¹⁰⁰ It is also used by the Greeks from Cairo and the Greek state to address all the *Egyptiotes* who live in Egypt.

¹⁰¹ For Cavafy’s poem, ‘Thermopylae’, translated by Keeley E. and Sherrard P., see: <http://www.cavafy.com/poems/content.asp?id=69&cat=1>

¹⁰² The battle between the Greeks and the large Persian army of Xerxes I, in 480 BC, when 300 Spartans died protecting the pass at Thermopylae.

¹⁰³ As Cavafy does not define what exactly Thermopylae symbolizes in his poem, its meaning remains open to interpretation, something that represents anything worthy of being guarded.

¹⁰⁴ See glossary

¹⁰⁵ The rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the region has reinforced widely expressed feelings of uncertainty among the members of the community. The Thermopylae metaphor precedes the rise of religious fundamentalism and has been in use for the last three decades in relation to the longer story of protecting the community from decline.

¹⁰⁶ *Neos Tachydromos* (New Postman) in Alexandria and *Fos* (Light) in Cairo are the only newspapers in circulation today.

¹⁰⁷ The historical data used on the GKA website are based on historical studies conducted exclusively by Alexandrian researchers (the main one being Soulogiannis 1999; 2005).

¹⁰⁸ Smith also stresses the importance of the ‘myth-symbol’ complex, namely, of a ‘core’ of ‘myths, memories, values and symbols’ that lies at the heart of the ethnic communities and is transmitted

through and between the members of the collectivity and down through the generations (Smith, 1986, 15–16, quoted in Banks, 1996, 130).

¹⁰⁹ Its main goal was Greece's civilizing mission in the eastern Mediterranean, which inspired Greek irredentist claims for the return to Greece of areas of the Ottoman Empire inhabited by Greeks.

¹¹⁰ Ntalachanis also argues that the Greek state and the official representatives of the Greek communities in Egypt always spoke of the close ties between Greece and Egypt since antiquity in order to avoid equating Greeks with the British and French, who were identified with the colonial presence in Egypt. The Egyptian authorities, especially before the 1952 revolution, reproduced the above discourse as it corresponded to the main national narrative of both countries concerning the historical continuity of Greeks and Egyptians from ancient times until today. The Greek argument for privileged treatment of the *Egyptiotes* and especially their exemption from the laws imposed on all foreigners in the country from the 50s onwards was largely based on this special relationship (2015: 51).

¹¹¹ SAASA (*Syllogos Apofiton Averofeiou Scholis Alexandrias*), Association of Graduates of Averofeio School of Alexandria. Website of SAASA http://www.saasa.gr/section_8.asp

¹¹² It all started when an Alexandrian doctor, V. Karakatzanis, sent a letter to the newspaper *Tachydromos* (published by *Egyptiotes* Greeks in Alexandria) in 1992, where he referred to the lack of a statue of Alexander in the city which he founded. The statue was a donation of Marangopoulos, a wealthy Alexandrian.

¹¹³ The statue was designed by the Greek artist, Konstantinos Palaiologos (information given by a member of SAASA)

¹¹⁴ In both quotes from the website the dimension of space is dominant. The past is linked to the city.

¹¹⁵ K. P. Cavafys, *Poems Part A* (1896-1918), first standard edition, edited by G. P. Savvidis, Ikarus, Athens 1963 and K. P. Cavafys, *Poems Part B* (1919-1933), first standard edition, edited by G. P. Savvidis, Ikarus, Athens, 1963. This is essentially the first useful edition, which was widely circulated. In this edition, the corpus of Cavafy's work became accessible to new generations of readers. The older generation, and especially the wider audience, had become acquainted, though poorly, with Cavafy through his poems in the *Anthology* of Apostolidis. The importance of the first standard edition of Cavafy's poems by G. P. Savvidis is corroborated by the fact that all modern scholars quote this particular edition. The most complete edition of the standardized two-volume series is the eighth one and all the subsequent ones.

¹¹⁶ The Cavafeia programme was staged every second year, along with the presentation of the International Cavafy Award.

¹¹⁷ Annual report (*logodosia*) of GKA 1991, page 28.

¹¹⁸ It initially operated under the auspices of the cultural department of the Greek Embassy in Cairo, while after 1999 it was under the auspices of the Hellenic Cultural Institute, department of Alexandria. For more information about the museum see the following website and article:

<http://www.greece.org/alexandria/cavafy/cavafy2.htm> and

<http://www.avgi.gr/article/10964/1678023/kindyneuei-to-spiti-tou-kabaphe-sten-alexandreia>

¹¹⁹ Source: <http://news.in.gr/culture/article/?aid=1100351>

¹²⁰ See Tomara-Sideris 2003; 2004

¹²¹ Source: official website of GKA: <http://ekalexandria.org>

¹²² The GKA, but also many *Egyptiotes* from Greece, contributed financially in 1985 to the purchase of a private property in Athens that would house the SAE (Sindesmos Ellinon Egyptioton-Association of Greek *Egyptiotes*), which was founded in 1933. See: annual reports (*logodosies*) of GKA 1985, p. 23 & ff., 1989, p. 23 & ff., 1990, p. 25 & ff., 1991, p. 24. See also website of SAE <http://www.synaige.gr/>

¹²³ See chapter three, pp 88-89 for some of the practical problems that were solved.

¹²⁴ Some of the *Egyptiotes* who have acted as benefactors in Greece and their contributions: Averof's contribution to the motherland Greece was considered so outstanding that he was declared national benefactor. The restoration of the Panathenaic Stadium (where the first modern Olympic Games were held in 1896) took place with funding from Averof. The Military Academy, the Athens Penitentiary and the Averof battleship were all built with his donations. In addition, *Egyptiotes* contributed 2.5 million drachmas to the war fund. Benakis made donations to the Red Cross Hospital, the Children's Shelter in Kifissia, the Hospital for Refugees, the National Gallery, the Library of the Greek Parliament and Athens College. Pantelis Vassanis built the Naval Academy, Petros Sivitanidis built a school, which bears his name, Evangelos Achilopoulos built the Volos hospital and Theodoros Kotsikas donated funds to many of the public buildings in Karystos (Evia). See Tomara-Sideri (2003;2004).

¹²⁵ The institution of the Free Open University, which existed from 1984 until 1990, was one of the most important initiatives. Once a month, the communities of Alexandria and Cairo would welcome professors, writers, scholars and intellectuals who would give lectures about important topics. Other important events were those organized to honour the 100th anniversary of the foundation of the Averofeio High School in 1985 and the 150th anniversary of the Greek *koinotita* in 1993. For more details, see Soulogiannis 2005: 317-323

¹²⁶ An initiative by the public Radio and Television Broadcasting Company, ERT, under the authority of the World Council of Hellenes Abroad.

¹²⁷ In 1995, for the first time, a Presidential Decree by the Greek state established the World Council of Hellenes Abroad (SAE). Its objective was to act as a consultative and coordinating body which would present to the Greek state issues concerning the Greek Diaspora. At the organizational First World Convention of the SAE in Thessaloniki (29 November–8 December 1995) Andrew A. Athens, from Chicago, was appointed President (1995-2006). After the application of Law No. 3480/2006, the SAE took on a new dynamic role, establishing its advisory, consultative, assertive and supportive responsibilities towards the Greek state. In December 2006, Stefanos P. Tamvakis was elected President. The SAE's main goal according to its website, is 'cooperation, reinforcement and unity of the Hellenic Diaspora at a global level, so that Hellenism can grow even stronger. The most important role that the SAE is called to perform is to reach out to the Greeks of the Diaspora; to create a global network of Greeks, with the aim of planning and executing programmes that benefit the Hellenic Diaspora, and, as a consultative and advisory body, directly report to the Greek state'. The SAE ceased to operate in 2010 (source: <http://el.sae.gr/>).

¹²⁸ The reasons are given in chapter four.

¹²⁹ Only one of his books was placed by me in a show case devoted to literature.

Chapter 6

¹³⁰ The history of the city's foundation and its connection to Alexander the Great is important not only for Greek Alexandrians but for Alexandrians more generally, as illustrated by Youssef Chahine's *The Alexandria Trilogy* particularly the 1979 film, *Alexandria...Why? (IskandaryyiaLeh?)*.

¹³¹ 'Alexandria'. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Alexandria-Egypt>

¹³² Alongside the Egyptian and foreign archaeological missions working in Alexandria in the past few decades, the underwater excavations by IAMAS (*Institute of Ancient and Medieval Alexandrian Studies*) are taking place off the coast of Alexandria under the direction of H. Tzalas, and the excavations on land by the EIEAP, *Elliniko Instituto Ereunas tou Alexandrinou Politismou* (Hellenic Institution for the Research into Alexandrian Culture) under the direction of P. Papakosta.

¹³³ It is believed that the current downtown area is built over the old Hellenistic city of Alexandria. The notion is further sustained by the existence of many archaeological sites such as the Roman amphitheatre, which is located within a few minutes walk from the city centre, and other historical sites, which are still under excavation. It is also believed that the tomb of Alexander the Great lies below Nabi Daniel Mosque.

¹³⁴ From 13,000 inhabitants in 1821, the population grew to over 100,000 by 1840 and reached 180,000 in 1865. The cotton boom only reinforced this growth and by 1872, the population stood at 213,000 inhabitants, a figure which was to increase to 600,000 by 1927 (figures provided by Ilbert 1997: 23)

¹³⁵ Many examples illustrate how social groups or individuals can become agents of innovation and modernity on the periphery, implementing patterns of town planning and organization of urban living as previously developed in the European metropolis.

¹³⁶ Such as Lloyd's Bank, Credit Foncier Egyptien, the Banque Central and others.

¹³⁷ It had been inhabited since 1860 mainly by Europeans and wealthy Egyptians.

¹³⁸ In its peak years, the Greek population there reached around 300.

¹³⁹ For the *koinotitas* of Alexandria and suburbs, see Yialourakis 2006, pp 284-318.

¹⁴⁰ The system still applies today, but the Egyptian government recently introduced some changes, which means that this right would be transferred only to first generation relatives, and then lost.

¹⁴¹ Although there are no official and definite boundaries that clearly define the city centre of Alexandria, this area is defined based on what Alexandrians actually say when they mention the name city centre. For Egyptians it is '*west el balad*' which means city centre. But for Greek Alexandrians is '*pao stin poli*', which literally means I'm going to the city. The phrase '*pao stin poli*' is not used by Greeks from the mainland to refer to the city centre. Instead, it is used to mean 'I'm going to the City ... [of Constantinople]', which is 'The Ultimate City'.

¹⁴² For more on the changing nature of public culture see Sennett W., *The fall of public man*, 2017

¹⁴³ The mental maps method helped me understand how younger members of the community were related to certain spaces in the city and why this relationship was important to them. The maps they made constitute very interesting visual ethnographic material, which requires special attention. Therefore, all the maps are presented in Appendix II of my doctoral thesis and will be the material of a future study.

¹⁴⁴ Halim argues that in the western imagination ancient Alexandria is considered a fallen city and the Arabs are to blame for its fall. In the 19th century and after 'thousands of years of silence', modern Alexandria was reborn. But after the grand appearance of Arabs in the modern city (after Nasser), the city was lost again (2013).

Chapter 7

¹⁴⁵ The focus on education is common not only to Alexandrians but for all Egyptians Greeks.

¹⁴⁶ According to Pelissier (1991), 'formal' education is characterized by deliberate teaching and learning which takes place in contexts removed from occasions of use and emphasizing the acquisition of principles and skills that can be generalized across contexts. 'Informal' education, in contrast, is characterized as something that does not happen deliberately but rather in the course of some activity, emphasizing concrete skills and information that usually do not involve general principles or the ability to generalize across contexts.

¹⁴⁷ In those theories the education system and the school in particular are seen to serve dominant interests in the social reproduction of inequality, but anthropologists also explored the potential of schools to produce knowledge that might liberate individuals and groups from systems of domination, and as the means to transform and change societies rather than merely reproduce it.

¹⁴⁸ While the school plays a central role in reproducing the Greek Alexandrian community, formal education is not the only factor contributing to the shaping and reproduction of Greek identity. Schools complement a plethora of other institutions, such as the family, local society, the Greek government, *the koinotites* and other local entities. All of those institutions have their own discourse, at times coordinated with, while at others, opposing, the discourse of the school. The Egyptian society also plays its role, mainly as a boundary, as the 'other', towards which the Greek Alexandrian identity is constructed. Conversely, what is defined, reproduced or challenged, is not only ethnic identity but a range of identifications and positions.

¹⁴⁹ The administrative bodies involved in the continuation and dissemination of the Greek language, the preservation of history and culture in diaspora communities may be the educational services of the country of origin (Greece), the host-residence country, the Church, the communities, the organizations of the *paroikeies* or private individuals (Damanakis 2007: 80).

¹⁵⁰ Some of the policies are related to the idea of repatriation (e.g for the Greeks of Germany) and their mission is to prepare students for integration into the Greek educational system. Other policies (e.g. for the Greeks of America or Australia) refer to integration into the society of the host country, by cultivating the Greek language within the predefined limits of the multicultural and multilingual policy of the latter. These are educational policies with an intercultural approach (Damanakis 2007: 84).

¹⁵¹ See footnote number 42

¹⁵² The Greek argument for privileged treatment of the *Egyptiotes* and especially their exemption from the laws imposed on all foreigners in the country from the 50s onwards was largely based on the close ties between Greece and Egypt since antiquity. In some cases, as in the case of the schools, *Egyptiotes* succeeded in receiving preferential treatment (Ntalachanis 2015: 51).

¹⁵³ Vatimbellas, N. (1945). *To kathikon tou Aigyptiotou Ellinismou ke ta scholia mas*, [The duty of the Egyptian Hellenism and our schools], Alexandria, p .43.

¹⁵⁴ Although community schools were more numerous, not all Greek schools in Egypt depended on the *koinotites*. In this chapter I will examine the schools (primary and secondary) dependent on the *koinotites*, which actually educated the vast majority of Egyptian Greek pupils. For more details see Markantonatos 1957.

¹⁵⁵ Today there are 48 schools of this type around the world, many of which are in Germany. For more see <http://www.kathimerini.gr/847615/article/epikairothta/ellada/litothta-sta-sxoleia-e3wterikoy>

¹⁵⁶ For more details on the different types of Greek diaspora schools see Damanakis 2007

¹⁵⁷ AYE/1951/7/2/1/1 Syllabi of the Greek schools in Egypt

¹⁵⁸ In Egypt they speak Egyptian Arabic, which is a dialect of the Arabic language.

¹⁵⁹ Another reason given by most members of the community is that there was no need to learn Arabic, as the Egyptians (mainly grocers and housekeepers) learnt basic Greek in order to communicate with them.

¹⁶⁰ The first school of Alexandria was called *School of Graikoi* and it was in operation long before the Greeks were organized in a community.

¹⁶¹ In 1968 it was sold to the Greek government and today it is the headquarters of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria.

¹⁶² Some of them were *Familiadios*, the *Averofoio School for Girls*, the *mixed municipal school of Rameli – Aristofronios*, the *primary schools of Ibraimias*. For details on the schools see Soulogiannis 1999, 2005; Lekkou 2004.

¹⁶³ Although all community schools had tuition fees, they were waived for many students whose parents were unable to pay, since bequests existed to grant scholarships. In 1951, for example, of the 1167 students of the community schools, only 5 per cent were paying full tuition fees (Soulogiannis 1999: 97).

¹⁶⁴ Some examples are the *Aischylos-Arion* Association which operated a night school, a day primary school for boys and girls, and a primary school for boys, a technical school and an orphanage inside the Asylum and Kaniskereio. Also, the *Enosis Ellinidon Kirion* "Manna" operated a night school for girls called *Ergatis*. For more details see Soulogiannis 1999, pp. 84-85.

¹⁶⁵ Lykeio Gika, Lykeio Korais, Lykeio Apolloneio etc. For more, see Soulogiannis 1999, pp. 77-78.

¹⁶⁶ For example, in 1912-1913 out of 8,177 students attending the Greek schools, 128 were students of non-Greek origin (Soulogiannis 1999: 97).

¹⁶⁷ ΑΥΠΕΕ/KY/1961/16/1/3/1, 171, *Anaskopisi etous 1960, Alexandria, 9.2.1961, Mpaizos pros presveia Kairou*

¹⁶⁸ Another reason that led Greek pupils to attend schools associated with western countries was that studying in a foreign school facilitated the learning of a foreign language.

¹⁶⁹ "The position and the destination of the Greek educational establishments in Egypt", *Bulletin of the GCCA*, 581, 15/7/1948, 1-3.

¹⁷⁰ Such as the 25th of March, which commemorates the Greek War of Independence, waged by Greek revolutionaries between 1821 and 1832 against the Ottoman Empire. The 28th of October, known as *Ohi Day (No day)*, which commemorates the rejection by Greek Prime Minister Ioannis Metaxas of the ultimatum made by Italian dictator Benito Mussolini on 28 October 1940. The Hellenic counterattack against the invading Italian forces in the Pindus mountains during the Greco-Italian War and the Greek Resistance during the Axis Occupation. The 17th of November, which commemorates the Athens Polytechnic uprising in 1973, a massive demonstration of popular rejection of the Greek military junta of 1967-1974. The 23rd of October, when the *Egyptiotes* honour the soldiers of Greece and the Allied Powers who fell during the 2nd World War in the Battle of El Alamein.

Greeks do not celebrate the Egyptian national days (6th of October, etc.), or Muslim celebrations (Eid, etc). However, in accordance with Egyptian laws, the Greek schools were and still are obliged to close during those holidays.

¹⁷¹ The institution of the school unions was established in the secondary schools of GKA long before they were introduced to Greece. The school clubs were a breeding ground for knowledge and cultural activities 'for the purpose of keeping the students off the streets and out of the coffee houses' (cited in Soulogiannis 1999: 92-93). Always with the help of teaching staff, students organized celebrations of historic anniversaries, concerts, shows with traditional dances, theatrical plays, trips to Egypt and abroad, especially to Greece and Cyprus, school newspapers etc.

¹⁷² The Boy Scouts and Girl Guides were officially founded in Egypt in the early 20th century as part of the International Scouts movement and played an important role in Greek Alexandrian society (For more details on the Scouts in Egypt, see Soulogiannis 1988). Today the Scouts in Alexandria are still very active in community life although their numbers are very limited. In my research I didn't pay much attention to the activities of these young Alexandrians (mainly school students), although their role was quite central in almost all community events. Further research on this subject is needed.

¹⁷³ For more details see Ragazos 1967: 610-611.

¹⁷⁴ For footage showing gymnastics displays performed by all schools of Athens in the *panathinaiko stadio* in 1952, see video http://mam.avarchive.gr/portal/digitalview.jsp?get_ac_id=2482 no. T14900. For footage showing gymnastics displays performed by all the schools of Alexandria in the Municipal stadium of Alexandria in the 50's, see video here <https://www.facebook.com/christos.christofidis.7/videos/835549793240416/>

¹⁷⁵ The school parades are a characteristic feature of the Greek educational system. However, the idea of discipline has dwindled in Greece in the past decades along with the decreasing militarization of the school parades.

¹⁷⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1442009716010684/>

¹⁷⁷ *Tachydromos* 21-11-1962

¹⁷⁸ In 1927, 18.2 per cent of the Egyptian Greek population were considered illiterate, while in Greece during the same period, illiteracy rate was as high as 41.6 percent (Annuaire statistique, 1937-38, Cairo, Imprimerie nationale, 1938. *Statistika apotelesmata tis apografis tis Ellados tou 1928*, v 2. Athens, National Printing Press, 1935. Sources cited in Ntalachanis 2015, p. 185).

¹⁷⁹ A few examples are the Tositsea Primary School, which was bought by the Greek state and then ceded to the Patriarchate to become its headquarters; the Averofeio Girls School, which now houses the Greek Chamber of Commerce and the HFC; the Benakeio Orphanage, which houses the CGG; the Ibrahimia Primary School, which was leased to the Egyptian state and still operates as a school for Egyptians, etc.

¹⁸⁰ Lave (2003) has studied how changes in flows of capital commodities, culture and people in the British enclave in Porto (Portugal), led to struggles over schools and community identities. Although debates between the British old port families and the Portuguese manager families in Porto are not over the same issues that divide the different generations in Alexandria, there are quite a few similarities especially regarding the special role given to the school in producing and shaping the future of their communities.

¹⁸¹ One of the prevailing popular explanations among US anthropologists of education in the early 70s concerning ethnic inequalities in educational achievements was that ethnic minority students were 'culturally deprived' in relation to their White counterparts, and therefore needed a kind of cultural remediation. Later on, anthropologists claimed that it was not a matter of cultural deprivation, but rather of cultural difference. They argued that ethnic minority students tended to do more poorly in school because their cultures of origin used different styles of communication to educate children in the home. Ironically, the ethnic minority students of the Greek schools in Alexandria are considered to be the Egyptians.

¹⁸² During the period of my research (2011-2012), the number of students of the Pratsikios-Tositsaia elementary school was 30, while the Averofeio High School had 42 students, an average of 7 students in each class. During this period most of the students were Christians (Orthodox or Copts) while there were also few Muslims. The composition of the students at the high school' was as follows: a) Greek pupils mainly children of teachers from Greece: 19 b) Children from mixed marriages: 15 c) Egyptians: 8 d) Greek Alexandrians (both parents Greek who are residents of Alexandria): 7. Sources: Book no 8, Student registry of Averofeio High School 1979-1989-2015, Book no7. 2.

¹⁸³ For more information on the difficulties of the Greek state to support the Greek schools of diaspora see <http://www.kathimerini.gr/847615/article/epikairothta/ellada/litothta-sta-sxoleia-e3wterikoy>

¹⁸⁴ Although in the period of my study (2011-2012) the Greek state had cut the supplementary salaries of the teachers (which were restored in 2016), in the minds of my informants this bonus remained one of the main reasons inducing teachers to come to Alexandria. The fact that despite the acute crisis in Greece, which is under pressure to cut jobs in the public sector, the state is still subsidizing the education of Greek Alexandrians is very significant in terms of the perceived importance of these communities for Greece, and the commitment of Greece to uphold 'Greekness' outside its national boundaries.

¹⁸⁵ As already mentioned the only *Elladites* who were held in higher esteem by the Greek Alexandrian residents were the official representatives of the Greek state, mainly politicians, but also unofficial representatives such as famous artists, scholars and so on.

¹⁸⁶ In the old days (before the 1960s), the teaching of other languages, mainly French and English, constituted a basic feature of Greek education in Egypt, as within the multicultural environment of Alexandria, knowledge of foreign languages was necessary for daily communication. Today students still learn three languages but the level is very low.

¹⁸⁷ See e-article cited in footnote 140.

¹⁸⁸ A Greek Alexandrian informant, married to a non-Greek Orthodox woman, expressed his view on the subject. He believes that the future of the community lies in the co-existence with Egyptians and, since the children are learning the Greek language, then the Greekness of the children is not threatened: 'Even though I married a Copt, I imposed a rule on my wife, that our children will go to a Greek school to learn the language, the customs and traditions of Greece. In my opinion, as long as you speak Greek, you are Greek. I truly wonder about how someone can define Greekness'.

¹⁸⁹ *Bowab* (the Egyptian doorman), is a slang word the Greeks use to indicate someone of a lower class.

¹⁹⁰ For more reasons for this failure see Ntalachanis 2015: pp 200-215

Chapter 8

¹⁹¹ A Greek university with postgraduate courses, which was to be called 'Alexander the Great' and was to have been situated in the *Elliniko Tetragono* (with departments of Archaeology, History, Architecture); a Greek Archaeological Institute, which would follow the model of similar foreign institutes in Alexandria; while in later years, the authorities were also discussing the possibility of creating an orphanage in the *Elliniko Tetragono*, which would provide housing for orphans sent from Greece. The National Technical University of Athens (NTUA) had expressed great interest in sending students to conduct postgraduate research and produce doctoral theses. Soulogiannis mentions that 'the Alexandrians, Tositsas and Stournaras, founded NTUA and now it feels as though the Polytechnic should give something in return. This time, Greece wants to offer something to Alexandria. If those initiatives materialize, they will strengthen the preservation of Greek presence in the city, which began from a Greek and it still retains this memory alive" (Soulogiannis 2005: 323).

¹⁹² For example, the event for the 150th anniversary of the Egyptian Press (150 years of Greek Press in the land of the Nile, December 2015).