Halstead, Huw. 2018. *Greeks without Greece. Homelands, Belonging, and Memory amongst the Expatriated Greeks of Turkey*. London: Routledge. 270 pages. ISBN (E-Book): 9781351244718.

Reviewed by **Julia Fröhlich**[1]
University of Vienna
julia.froehlich@univie.ac.at

National and nationalist discourse is an omnipresent phenomenon, by far not exclusively confined to specific forms of media discourse, commemorative events – such as the centenary celebrated this year in Turkey –, or political debates. Indeed, it permeates and shapes much more personal spheres constituting the framework for individual identity formation by drawing on collectively created structures of meaning making and interpretation. Taking the terms 'nationhood' and 'ethnicity' as analytic points of departure, Huw Halstead investigates identity and memory formation among the expatriated Greeks of Istanbul and Imbros with relations to trauma, uprooting, and fitting into the 'new' national framework provided by the Greek state. Explicitly refraining from equating national identity with statehood, Halstead seeks to 'formulate a concept of national identity that allows for its heterogeneity and malleability in distinctive local contexts,' a concept that 'declines to be beguiled by its surface impression of homogeneity and unity, but that nonetheless accounts for its durability, its persistence even in a world of flows, and its capacity to sustain claims of national communality' (p. 5). Accordingly, national identity is presented as inherently ambiguous, allowing for overlaps, parallels, and seemingly striking contradictions. Specifically focusing on the expatriate communities of Istanbul and Imbros, his work draws on analytic models and concepts rooted in the interdisciplinary fields of migration studies, diaspora studies, nationalism studies and memory studies. Halstead's work builds on the specific context of these communities to discuss national(ist) discourse and boundaries in a much more general sense, thereby seeking to present 'an everyday history of historical memory' that may be used to deconstruct excluding nationalism from within (p. 236).

Divided into four parts, comprising eight chapters (excluding introduction and conclusion) in total, the monograph seeks to give a multi-angle view on the possible ways of national identity construction observable in the expatriate groups examined. By doing so, Halstead draws on a comprehensive set of oral testimonies given by expatriates of both the first and second generation. These reports, compiled during fieldwork in Greece between 2011 and 2015, constitute the core of his sources. Deliberately avoiding the term 'interview,' which, for him, insinuates a rigid pre-conceived and questionnaire-supported structure that may create constraints and boundaries for the narrator, he successfully extracts various forms of mnemonic frameworks and

1 Julia Fröhlich is recipient of a DOC Fellowship of the Austrian Academy of Sciences.

strategies of meaning making that are relevant to national identity formation. Consequent analysis unfolds along both diachronic and synchronic lines.

Setting the contextual basis, the first chapter titled 'The Greeks of Turkey' gives a comprehensive overview on important, relatively recent milestones in the history of the Greek communities of Istanbul and Imbros: their exemption from the Greek-Turkish population exchange, repression in course of Turkish nation-building and consequent homogenisation measures as well as the Istanbul Riots and other forms of extreme violence: all of which ultimately led to large-scale emigration to Greece, leaving the once prospering Greek communities dismantled and drastically decreased in size. By illustrating the reactions shown by individual and groups of expatriates upon arrival and integration into Greek society, this chapter provides a valuable frame for the following investigation of memory and strategies of meaning making.

Chapter 2 is the first attempt at in-depth discussion of the everyday reception and articulation of nationhood by 'ordinary people' (p. 45) by analysing the term *patrída* (pl. *patrídes*) as a metaphorical expression of the prominent role of local particularity in national identity formation. Clearly disentangling nationhood from statehood, Halstead concludes that "being Greek' is often given substance through the familiar local world rather than the abstract national world' (p. 55).

The dominant role attributed to local distinctiveness is closely linked to 'inclusive particularity' explored in chapter 3. Zooming in on what he calls the 'Hellenic-Romaic dilemma' (p. 62), he discusses processes off identity formation of expatriates in Greece, and configurations of self with relations to their historical anchor points in Greek national history: Predominantly choosing to identify either with Romaic Byzantium or Ancient Hellenism, and simultaneously trying to differentiate themselves from the 'regular' Greeks in Greece, expatriates 'draw on their identification with a particular local place of origin in order to authenticate their claims to national belonging, and, consequently, advocate for their presence in – and support from – the Greek state' (p. 83). Not giving in to simplicity, however, Halstead also points out that 'there are many ways to be Hellenic' (p. 76) with the term 'Hellen' denoting 'different things in different performative contexts' (p. 75), which further complicate discourses of self and belonging.

Turning to one core mechanism of identity negotiation, namely consolidating alleged unity through various strategies of othering, chapter 4 analyses positive and negative stereotypes of 'the Turk,' concluding that 'representations of the Turkish other (…) often have at least as much to do with negotiating the expatriates' place in the Greek state as with rationalizing their experience in Turkey' (p. 110). With relation to the expatriate communities, 'the Turkish other' has a dual function: potentially serving both as the bad counterpart ('the generalised Turk,' p. 93) making the Greek nation state shine in comparison AND 'a potent and provocative discursive weapon with which to spotlight perceived deficiencies within Greek society' (p. 110), which is based on a more favourable representation of a 'particularised Turk' (p. 93) – perceived as an individual who is the exception to the rule.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 broaden the conceptual horizon of the study by discussing the concepts of transcultural memory and multidirectionality. Particularly focusing

on Holocaust memory as a prominently and hotly discussed example for multidirectional, 'travelling' memory, Halstead presents 'past presencing' (Sharon Macdonald, 2013), referring to the practice of referring to past events to describe the present, as a chance for transcultural solidarity: 'Mnemonic cross-fertilisation,' as he puts it, may lead to more knowledge on trauma experienced by specific victim groups, which may in turn result in higher degrees of empathy and solidarity (p. 164). Hedging his optimistic appraisal that in many cases – including those discussed by himself (e.g. mnemonic links between 'The Fall of Constantinople' 1453 and the Istanbul Riots 1955 / between the November pogrom 1938 and the Istanbul Riots) – can be hardly upheld in view of discursive hardening, Halstead rightly concedes that this form of meaning making can be fraught with pitfalls: maybe most eye-strikingly, unruly simplification and superficial memory appropriation epitomised by so-called 'off-the-peg memories' that allow for not engaging with history on one's own and in depth (p. 188). Superficial cross-referencing may thus add to further discursive boundaries between specific 'groups,' as past events are used to reaffirm already existing narratives on national trauma and victimhood (p. 189). I believe that this possible contribution to hardened nationalist discourse through multidirectional memory is a particular salient point to raise – in view of contemporary discourses that tend to use 'past presencing' and transcultural cross referencing as 'othering' mechanisms, thereby leaving little room for potential feelings of solidarity and empathy that Halstead envisages as the 'best-case scenario.' Successfully refraining from trying to present *the one*, *universally* valid explanation for the heavily entangled expatriate discourses investigated, this book – and especially chapters 5 to 7 – confine themselves to pointing out possibilities and potentials of transcultural memories, without claiming to propose a simple solution to exclusionary nationalist discourse and boundaries.

The final chapter, titled 'Welcome to Gökçeada. The Greek Return to Imbros' once more discusses the complexities attached to national identity formation and mnemonic frameworks of meaning making. Referring to the various forms (e.g. permanent, semi-permanent, seasonal) that the return of expatriates to Imbros takes, Halstead explores 'the negotiation and contestation of belonging in the everyday experience of the return' (p. 199). Being much more interested in 'the banal' than 'the exceptional' (p. 199), he focuses on feelings, reactions, and challenges connected to belonging and alienation, perhaps best expressed in the figure of the 'native tourist' (p. 210) who finds himself in between fixed categories. Portraying the return to the *patrída* as 'an ongoing process of homing' (p. 223), Halstead once more manages to analyse complex, often painful processes with much insight and sensitivity.

Generally, the monograph makes itself conspicuous through precise, carefully chosen language, with dominant key works in national(ist) discourses being discussed and defined in much detail. Sensitivity is also extended to analysis of expatriate testimonies, their contextualisation and presentation as parts of multi-faceted discourses: Halstead successfully endeavours to place the discussion in a frame devoid of judgement and criticism, thus describing and analysing, for instance, anti-Turkish stereotypes without resolving to moralistic condemnation that would render consequent discussion highly biased. With an impressive, in-depth conceptual spine drawing

from memory studies, migration studies, diaspora studies and nationalism studies, the monograph convincingly analyses the processes governing memory and identity formation observable for the two expatriate communities of Istanbul and Imbros, leaving little room for criticism. This is especially grounded in a laudable awareness of the limitations and hardly maintainable generalisability of the presented arguments, which leads Halstead to present identity and memory formation as the multi-faceted, subjectively and collectively shaped process that it is.