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Non-Greek farmers and heritage in the sustainable development of the Greek countryside

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Heritage is a complex good in rural areas- a new multifaceted commodity. In many Greek countrysides heritage is desperately sought to counter senses of inferiority, depopulation, and general malaise. Centuries-old olive groves and related practices face extinction. Initiatives to protect them are few and largely unsuccessful. Organic methods, products of designated origin and geographic indication, and agritourist enterprises are haphazardly pursued. In the spaces created by this dissonance, various socio-economic roles have been allotted to new immigrants. Immigrant farmers in Laconia prefecture in particular, based on their engagements with struggling Greek farm families, small-scale agriculture, and rural life in general inadvertently co-construct the few emergent possibilities for heritage and sustainable development. Due to the overall support they provide for multifunctional land use activities, they should be seen as potential resources with regard to these possibilities and the paths contemporary ethnoecological adaptations might take there.

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Introduction

Anthropologists, amongst other scholars, have long been enamored with the rural (Kertzer, 71). We are still drawn to villages such as Gower-Chapman's Milocca and Friedl's Vasilika as well as rural notions and tropes like honor and shame or amoral familism. Archaeologist Paul Halstead has written; "ethno-archaeological study of the last vestiges of traditional rural economy in the Mediterranean is a matter of the greatest urgency" (86). What 'vestiges' truly exist within supposed village boundaries is debatable. Raymond Williams admits that the 'rural' is merely a charade. Yet he also notes that it requires demystification. Beyond the study of agricultural productions regimes, the lavish attention paid to fisherwomen or 'herring lassies' in Scotland by painters in order to evoke a countryside unsullied by industrialization for example (Nadel-Kline, 33, 68), or the imagination of other ideal rural types such as 'pastoralists' or 'farmers' points to a complex intermingling of the forces of production and consumption in and of rural countrysides, perhaps especially those European. Whatever the rural is, it deserves our attention.

I occasionally also use the term 'countryside' to highlight the shift from production to consumption regimes in rural areas and the multiple types of activities and stakeholders that now make it what it is- those who use the rural as well as those who relate to it as a form of exchange value (Hirsch and O'Hanlon, 22). A new focus on ecological balance in the 1998 EC Commission Report entitled 'The Future of Rural Society' described new areas of leisure and environmental preservation, eldercare, etc- a shift from sector-based price supports to regionally based schemes, economic diversification, infrastructural improvements, rural heritage protection, environmental protection, and restoration of landscapes. This essentially entails a shift from agricultural space to local policy places of rural development; "the multiple functions of agriculture include products (goods and services, marketable or public) but also less tangible elements of rural development, such as social inclusion, cultural heritage and landscape value, which may not be easily entangled" (Fleskens et. al., 142). Thus social categories are considered alongside biology or

topography as a socio-ecological domain we might refer to as the neo rural European countryside. The development of new European national parks is particularly interesting (Schwartz, Heatherington) signaling a diversification of places that perhaps even challenges European cohesion (Gray). In any case, rural landscape scientists, anthropologists, and other scholars struggle to characterize the conflicts inherent in the Community Agricultural Policy (CAP) which attempts to account for the new and vast array of complex issues. Some places have emerged as embodiments of both agriculture and cultural heritage. The productive, ecological, and touristic values of vineyard landscapes on the island of Santorini are rare examples in Greece. Despite the fact that agriculture is wrongly assumed to have reached its limits (van der Ploeg, 1993) and an environmental or agricultural heritage perspective has the capacity to revive traditional local markets, much of rural Europe remains neither successfully integrated nor diversified.

The LEADER initiatives, the EC's re-territorializing and neo-endogenous approach to development introduced by the Directorate General of Agriculture and Rural Development (DGVI) in 1991, have been seen by some as supporting a "category of flow" as opposed to a fixed category of rural representations such as 'peasants' and 'farmers' (Ray, 279). Traditional foods, regional languages, crafts, folklore, local visual arts and drama, literary references, historical and pre-historical sites, landscape systems and their associated flora and fauna potentially become more fully integrated with less static or more neo-rural approaches. As Ingold has written, this is the dwelt-in world, a focus on the "active, perceptual engagement with the practical business of life, rather than on the detached, disinterested observation of a world apart" (40). Neo-rural trends might lead us to believe that southern Europe is in advantageous position. Heatherington notes that the very poverty of highland Sardinia has allowed the region to conserve the natural resources now being reevaluated. Green has written of a reservoir of 'tradition' in Albania: "If Hoxja kept those people 'backward', this is turning out to be a most useful resource for Epirus's postmodern future" (277). Sleepy villages and burned areas are now "sites for exploring local meanings of sustainable rural development" (Schwartz 138) or for the "greening of backwardness" (Heatherington, 130). Yet authors regard the future in many rural regions of Spain and Italy and virtually all of Portugal and Greece as rather bleak (Hoggart et. al.).

Farmers, like artisans, are "exemplars of national virtue and tradition", a "repository of ancient skills and qualities" (Herzfeld, 4). Yet the "global hierarchy of values" inherent in high modernism's invention of tradition has been unkind and duplicitous to many exemplars (16). Miller (1987) refers to craft traditions as nostalgic products of disenchantment- that handmade products ironically reproduce hierarchies separating elites from peasants. Demetra Gefou-Madianou has written of a "double dialectic of tradition" in Greece. While tradition creates opportunities for claims by marginalized groups it also renders them subject to its hegemonic subordination. The experiences of retsina winemakers in Gefou-Madianou's case study have much in common with olive farmers, especially in Laconia prefecture where I conducted most of my fieldwork over the past few years. To be the national virtue and tradition- the heritage- or to know it, that has been the question (Green, 245). Recobbling old harbor areas in Scotland in order to make villages look more traditional is an obstacle to actual working fisherman as Nadel-Kline has pointed out (188). As rural Greeks similarly plaster over traditional stone facades of buildings and then uncover them again in an attempt to keep up with aesthetic trends, we again see the disconnect in modernity's multiple relationships with its rural areas: "however genuine the affection of residents in renovated villages for Mediterranean art and landscapes- even if this affection is tinged with snobbery- rural people, whether farmers or not, generally do not share it, partly because they cannot afford it, but also because their cultural standards are so low that they can no longer appreciate the values of their own country" (Chevalier, 178); "the essential paradox of rurality within developed nations is that while the existence of specific and exclusive rurality is increasingly contested at one level, the traditional components of rural areas (farmers, peasants, rural landscapes, fields, and forests, etc.) continue to occupy a central and growing place in many national, regional, local, and personal representations" (Hoggart et. al., 91).

Expensive raw milk, aesthetically modern in the extreme, is dispensed by state-of-the-art Italian-made machines in many parts of northern Europe. In Lithuania, by contrast, cheap raw milk is peddled by old women who straddle the shifting lines between tradition and modernity, benefiting little from neo-rural hierarchies of value (Mincyte). How to remain small-scale and 'natural' in Europe without diversifying to the point of extinction, intensifying in an unsustainable manner, or getting out like the 1998 EC Commission Report has suggested- how to know and *be* the heritage- remains the question for many farmers. Greek and non-Geek farmers in Laconia are together developing practices and strategies to address these questions. LEADER-backed Transnational Cooperation Projects are supposed to reconfigure power relations across Europe, potentially grouping minority cultures such as small-scale farmers with other such socio-economic groups in other areas. Ray suggests that there may even be ways to insert extra-local objectives regarding the environment or immigrants into the agenda of such endogenous development initiatives and that agriculture might also be reinserted into rural areas vis-à-vis the settlement of marginalized people (169-170). In 1976, in *Regional Variation in Modern Greece and Cyprus* (Dimen and Schein), Greek sociologist Constantine Tsoucalas (423) wrote that 'deformities' have always accompanied Greece into the international community and market. This remained the case after EC accession in 1981, as it does today. Yet non-Greek farmers and farmworkers, in conjunction with a small group of Greek entrepreneurs, have provided impetus for a reappraisal of rural Greek life, its deformities as well as the potential for sustainability and heritage value there.

Agriculture, development, and rural landscape heritage in Europe

The CAP, instituted in 1957, signaled the reemergence of a European agricultural space that had been compromised by the nationalizing processes. It is one of the first truly transnational agricultural and rural development policies and therefore can address food security as well as global environmental concerns, consumption regimes and rural heritage; "sufficient numbers of farmers must be kept on the land. There is no other way to preserve the natural environment, traditional landscapes, and a model of agriculture based on the family farm as favored by society generally" (CEC 1991). The third Community Support Framework (CSF) of the CAP (2000-2006) was to intervene at the local and regional level with a the focus on younger farmers, introduce further training and services, develop and protect natural resources, encourage agritourism, etc. Yet the ease of global transport has brought about a significant decline in European agriculture. The massive modernization project from the 1950's and 1960's now "bites its own tail" (van der Ploeg, 2008:143). *Agricultura de salto*, the 'hit and run agriculture' of certain EU policies and market conditions as described by Italians, premises only profit and provides little in the way of true investment. Debates about genetically modified organisms have brought about disharmony in European agriculture. Organic production is also seen by some as questionable in its support for local economies (Fonte). Vagaries surrounding notions of 'sustainability' have created further conflict. As a consequence, "in the rural regions of Europe the ageing of the rural and farm population and the need to accommodate or reduce the flow of young people out of the countryside is a serious challenge to their sustainability" (Kasimis, 2009a).

In the neo-rural context, 'highly productive land' must now include historical landscapes known for traditional cultivations or ecological characteristics such as Santorini's vineyards according to EC Act 1337/83 in order to survive. The EU's EucalLand Project (European Culture expressed in Agricultural Landscapes) has focused on specialized agricultural techniques. Similar initiatives such as those identifying Products of Designated Origin (PDO's), of Geographic Indication (PGI's), and Traditional Speciality Guaranteed (TSG's) supposedly also consider local landscapes and traditions as tangible and intangible forms of rural heritages. Yet they only protect market opportunities. The inscription of Spanish *huerta* landscapes of irrigated agriculture, the first agriculturally-based landscapes on UNESCO's list of intangible heritage, signals other possibilities. Amfissa olive groves near Delphi, Masticha groves on Chios, and peat soils of the Philippi wetlands in Greece fit this criteria as well (Louloudis and Arahoviti). Yet they, along with centuries-old terraced olive groves all over the Mediterranean are largely overlooked by landscape classifications and policies despite their historical significance; "Notwithstanding their importance, specialized crops and the landscapes they produce do not appear in most landscape classifications and landscape descriptions on national and European levels. Therefore, they are non-existent in many national and certainly in European landscape policies" (Renes, 41).

Heritage and stagnation in the Mediterranean region

Braudel and many others have written of the Mediterranean triad of grapes, grains, and olives. The cultural identity of 'Mediterranean' people is largely expressed through related rural/agricultural pursuits in these landscapes. According to van der Ploeg (2008), a landscape is "ecosystems, buildings, types of land use, ecological values, patterns of opening up areas, visual experience, accessibility, town-countryside relations, transitions, water management systems, history and so on".

Yet as Hadjimichalis (2003:109-110) points out, most of Greece, along with major portions of other Mediterranean countries like Spain, Italy and Portugal is becoming marginal to northern Europe through a refashioning of the rural/urban divide as opposed to an emphasis on its heritage landscapes. Not since the Roman era has the European south had significant political or economic sway, the exceptional aspects of the Italian or Spanish economies notwithstanding (the 'vital axis' from southern England to northern Italy as well as the 'new growth axis' from eastern Spain to northern Italy). Pomplini (in Hoggart et. al., 73) describes virtually all of Greece and many Portuguese regions as inherently marginal. In fact no one seems to disagree about the lack of potential in Greece for significant development; "studies identify [rural Greece] as possessing development problems on a major scale throughout the land" (Hoggart et. al. 74). In northern Greece some rural communities have found novel ways to cope with marginalization through new infrastructures based on information technologies for example (Hadjimichalis and Sadler). Nothing like this exists in the south. What is more, while farms in Greece are disproportionately small, 4.4 hectares on average (Papadopoulos, 250), farms in the Peloponnese are smaller still, leaving little choice but to premise cultural and ecological values in prefectures such as Laconia.

Less Favoured Areas (LFA's) are defined as areas above 800 meters, areas with a slope of 16% or greater and which are above 600 meters, areas with slopes greater than 20%, areas in danger of abandonment of land use, as well as areas with other specific handicaps such as with regard to soil quality, accessibility, limited growing seasons, weather, and lack of infrastructure (Kastanidi, Papadopoulos, and Xalkias). The designation was created in 1975 in conjunction with the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and in response to the plight of upland livestock farmers in the UK. From Greece to Portugal such areas today include 56 million hectares of mountainous, semi-mountainous and arid plains (27 million inhabitants, 25% of the European continent, and 8% of the European population). LFA's make up 82% of the utilized agricultural area of Greece. Despite this special distinction intended to set aside aid and promote social stability and democracy, LFA's have become principal losers of EU accession (Louloudis et. al.). Despite the fact that the EU gives 2.5 billion euros in subsidies per year

for production diversity and multifunctionality of SMOPs (Sloping and Mountainous Olive Plantation Systems) common in Greek LFA's, there is limited collaboration amongst farmers, regional government, and environmental organizations. Much investment is wasted.

In Greece, minifundia areas such as those in Crete have gained some access to agricultural markets (Hadjimichalis and Papamichos, 194) but "generally speaking, systematic physical planning interventions have been restricted to the metropolitan and urbanized areas, whereas mobilization in matters pertaining to the agricultural landscape in Greece has only very recently been instigated through European Union legislation and subsidized interventions that enforce the protection and preservation of the rural landscape" (Terkenli and Kizos, 1). Conservation measures are perhaps least effective in Greece (applied to .08% of the national territory as opposed to 19% in Austria) (Hoggart et. al., 65) leading to the abandonment of many *paramethories perioxes*, or peripheral areas. Another main problem in Greece is the sale of products in bulk, such as *tenakethes* of olive oil- 17-liter tins containing more than 5 liters over the limit allowed by trade regulations. As Greece consumes more oil than any other European country, a significant market share is lost illegally at wholesale prices. Olive oil has historically been traded in such a way vis-à-vis social relations that often entail the direct payment for services. Consequently, national politicians are obliged to tolerate it. The Greek interest in bulk agricultural products can be seen in direct relation to its ignorance with regard to its own agricultural heritage and value-added niche products.

The link between subsidies and production has been severed within the parameters of the fourth CSF (2007-2013), known as the National Strategic Reference Framework. Few incentives to increase production capacity exist. Farmers must now be more marketed-oriented, consider the environment, support land management, improve the quality of life, and diversify the rural economy. Environmental groups like Birdlife International and the World Wildlife Federation as well as scholars concerned with resource conservation and or cultural heritage suggest a focus on traditional groves vis-à-vis the Olive Geographical Information System as well as cross compliance initiatives linking production incentives with EU environmental policies such as Agenda 2000 and Natura 2000. The LEADER axis would effectively transfer payments formerly made to farms more towards rural development initiatives like these. In general, the new axes provide assistance for new techniques and rural crafts, young farmers to set up farms, older farmers to retire, as well as value-added initiatives (such as setting up food processing technology on farms, farming in mountainous areas, renovations, tourism, heritage conservation, etc.). The first bottles of retsina wine with packaging resembling mainstream wines are now being sold. Markets for other Greek wine varieties such as xinomavro, stavrato, krassato, and moschofilero have also opened up. Wild and or heritage plants are of new interest- wild asparagus, thyme, lavender, oregano, mountain teas, capers, and local varieties/relatives such as finiki apples and koumara strawberries as well as indigenous breeds of animals. Some young people are moving to rural areas to take up farming as a response to increasing joblessness in urban areas due to the recent financial crisis (Cockburn, 2011). Yet the country's first truffle farmers still struggle for financial aid. Skepticism about farming aromatic herbs for their essential oils smothers initiatives spurred on by Greek agricultural universities to help olive farmers diversify. Litsis Ecological Farm, pioneers of Community Supported Agricultureⁱ and care farmsⁱⁱⁱ and preoccupied with reclaiming food quality and the dignity of land stewardship that has been lost in Greece have few partners. Frangiskos Karelias' biodynamic agritourist farm Evmelia can only be legally referred to as a 'visiting farm' due to the lack of any official distinction for agritourist businesses and is thus in many ways illegal. An overarching theme of sustainable best practices, heritage conservation, and ecological methods infuses the mission statement of Peliti, an alternative rural development and heirloom seed-saving initiative. Yet most who attended the 2009 Peleti festival were hobby farmers and urban dwellers, not the ruralites who desperately need the investment that interest in Greek rural/agricultural heritage might bring.

Diversification, branding, and marketing of the rural Greek environment

Officials in the DGVI in Brussels stressed to me the need for Greece to focus on promotion, packaging, and *tipopisois*, the branding or stylization of niche products (personal interviews, 2009). Greece should capitalize on UNESCO's Mediterranean Food Pyramid many said. They referred to ecodevelopment, a panacea like industrial development was not long ago (Heatheringington, 66). Greece currently has 23 PGI's. As agricultural cooperatives and other rural corporations and municipal governments make similar attempts at branding, some officials suggest each municipality or prefecture have its own PGI. Others insist that the Peloponnese should be one, as a recognizable region throughout Europe. No one is certain.

While agritourism in Italy started in the 1960's, Greece has only one small agritourism body (Το Βημα 2007). The fourth CSF has set out to promote investor interest, especially in fire-affected regions such as Laconia; "there's really no opportunities for tourism here. It's in a terrible state", complained a public school official in the Laconian town of Vlachiotis in 2010. "Everyone will eat each other. No one will protect the environment now" he predicted, despite such promotions.

At a more basic level, as an official at the ΠΕΠ in Tripolis (Περιφερειακό Επιχειρησιακό Πρόγραμμα Πελοποννήσου, Development office of the Peloponnese) explained in 2009 "we simply don't think like that". The ambiguities surrounding the etymology and translation of words like 'agricultural', 'rural', and 'wild' in Greek are representative of the difficulties encountered in attempting to multifunctionalize rural areas. As a representative at the Ministry of Rural Development and Food in Athens said to me, "we have a big problem with the meaning of the word agritourism here in Greece" (personal interview, 2009). The

word *agrotikos/agrotiki* (agrarian/agricultural/rural) or *agrotis* (farmer) shares roots with *agrios* (wild). Land where turtles breed on the island of Zakynthos, for example, thought of as empty and wild by many 'environmentalists' is conceptualized in quite another way by local fishermen (Theodossopoulos 2003:166). Nature (*fisi*) includes uninhabited wilderness as well as cultivated fields in the Greek imagination. Orders of inanimate and animate are more important than those stemming from a nature/culture (*fisi/politismos*) dichotomy. Theodossopoulos suggests we think in terms of cultivated nature, *kelliergimenei fisi* (175). In any case, the environment per se is seldom of primary concern. Migratory bird paths in the Southern Peloponnese identified by Natura 2000 are heavily hunted (Franzen). Nor do the designs of villages lend themselves to agritourism. The centripetal design of Greek villages, as opposed to the separation of farms in the North American countryside for example, was to provide protection against wild animals and predatory armies and facilitate the cultivation of the fields of neighbors (Sanders, 44). There is the potential to imagine wilderness in the spaces between isolated villages, accommodating eco-tourism (Heatherington, 68). For the time being however, these linguistic and demographic hurdles have served to undermine the application of the conventional European models of agritourism here.

Laconia Prefecture

Laconia is the third largest producer of citrus and the fifth largest olive oil producer in Greece. Yet the profile for Laconia is stark. The vast majority of produce goes to bulk juice and oil companies across Europe and prices, over which Laconians enjoy little control, have steadily declined. Most areas in this prefecture rank low based on a correlation of natural and socio-economic indicators to determine favorability (Kastanidi, Papadopoulos, and Xalkias). Heavily farmed, the tourist sector is limited despite the great variety of natural, archaeological, historical, environmental, architectural, and cultural wealth. Stavros Nikoletos, the chief municipal agronomist in Therapnes municipality, notes the isolation, poor general infrastructure, absence of town planning, insufficient links to centers and poor road conditions as contributing to limited growth as well as the disinterest young people have in staying. Unemployment of those aged 22-29 hovers around 45%. In terms of savings, income, and numbers of students in schools (18% fewer students each year and a high drop out rate) Laconia ranks low. In 1999 its population decreased by 154. The average household income that year was 45,000 drachmas whereas the national average was 127,000, placing Laconia 48th out of 52 prefectures. There is a deficiency in the local circulation, standardization, packaging, and merchandising of agricultural products. Irrigation networks are inadequate, as are stockbreeding infrastructure and fishing refuges. In sum his report concludes that local economic development, the improvement of the general quality of life, and the curbing of desertion by young people depends on a synthesis between production and consumption trends and development of the first and third sectors through agritourism. The Greek Ministry of Rural Development and Food has sought to reestablish the training division of the extension service from the late 1990's by creating the Organization of Agricultural Education, Training, and Occupation (OGEKA- DIMITRA) and has set up an office in every *nomarcheio* or municipal center in order to address just such concerns. The bittersweet return of one representative, from Athens to his home in Sparta (the municipal center of Laconia prefecture) reflects the experiences of many; "oh the possibilities here in Laconia, between the mountains and the sea, are endless", he said to me before sighing to also acknowledge the lack of progress made towards these ends (personal interview, 2010).

Olives and olive oil

From Homer to today's prosaic world, olives and olive oil- the gift of Athena, goddess of *texni*, craft and artisanship- have been the most significant agricultural products in Greece. Like the foustanelia (Greece's national costume) certain food products, such as olive oil and feta cheese are artifacts of cultural continuity. Olive groves that stretch towards the Bulgarian border completely disappear once one crosses into Bulgaria. They are an important 'topography of Hellenism' (Leontis) with ecological, socio-cultural, as well as productive functions. Municipal workers typically get time off every year for the olive harvest.

The craft and artisanship surrounding the olive industry is largely seen in contrast with the industrialization of northern Europe. The flora and fauna in traditional olive grove ecosystems and the limited use of pesticides in them similarly represents high levels of biodiversity in these LFA's. The olive production regimes of the Mediterranean, according to Meneley (685), lie between "artisanal technes of aesthetic distinction and industrial technoscience". In this sense, farms here lie in a friction zone; "traditions are not just zones of temporal contestation but are multiple areas and levels of spatial and cultural contestation which, in the new Europe, are being exacerbated through the processes of EC building as well as state and empire dissolution in the Balkans and along the former Soviet nations" (Wilson and Smith, 13). PDO's of olive varieties are a "Latourian hybrid of nature, culture, land, techne, technology, and climate" (Menelay 683).

Theodossopoulos points out that the olive harvest is the sole area of local cultivation in Greece that is still immune to agricultural technology (1999:622). Mechanization, as opposed to the skill-oriented and sophisticated technologies in olive production, represents formalization, routine procedures, endless repetition, and standstill to many. Thus olive farmers are perhaps poised to capitalize on tangible as well as intangible forms of cultural heritage. The tasting rooms of Umbria and Tuscany and the hand-written expiration labels of Italian extra virgin olive oil are markers of the new distinction and prestige associatd with traditionally produced olive oil- estate versus the mass-produced oils of Bertoli, Colavita, and

Carapelli. Yet Meneley points out that small-scale olive farmers have been largely unable to tap into the potential for heritage value, labelling this as a form of reverse orientalism. Using Herzfeld's global hierarchy of value, Gefou-Madianou's double dialectic of tradition, or Meneley's reverse orientalism as a theoretical tool, the point that one can either be the heritage or know it is made yet again.

A look at the wine industry in Greece provides some insight (Papadopoulos). Despite the fact that Greece has the longest wine-making history in Europe, 'class' issues and lack of investment still fragment this industry. Viticulture was entirely interrupted during the Ottoman period as France, for example, freely developed its prestige. What is more, as opposed to Spain, which produces approximately fifty million hectoliters of wine annually, Greece produces a paltry 3.5 million (less than 2% of Europe's total) largely due to a lack of state investment. As with olive oil, the vast majority of wine is consumed locally and fresh. Boutari, Kourtakis, and other large Greek wine producers purchase Greek grapes from all over the country to produce anonymous cheap wines for the mass market. Proportionally little can be described as having cultural value which can financially support the survival of quality wine production.

Despite the meager profits earned from maintaining groves on such small scales and at this point in history, "it's in their DNA", as Evangelos Vergos of the American Farm School in Thessaloniki explained to me (personal interview 2009); "there will always be olive oil here". Olive farming is the most widespread type of farming activity in Greece and families remain preoccupied with producing oil as well as wine for themselves. 50% of all Greek farms include some kind of olive farming (Tzouvelakas, et. al.). Yet, due to cheap wine imports from places like New Zealand and Australia, Europeans have begun tearing up old vines as they have become too expensive to maintain. Ancient olive trees, such as those in Xania celebrated in Peliti's 2008-2009 catalog and the subject of works by celebrated national poets like Kostis Palamas and Yiannis Ritsos are facing new risks.

Relative to Spain, Italy, as well as other European and North African countries in the Mediterranean, Greece has enjoyed a diminishing share of the world's olive production market since the 1960's. Cheaper seed oil imports have replaced the use of olive oil in many parts of the world. Small-scale olive farmers are also being put out of business by corruption. Opaque labeling practices, disguising harvesting and production techniques as well as chemical manipulation allows for the depression of pricing for high quality oil, as it enjoys burgeoning interest in the US, which only cheaters can withstand (Mueller). Subsidies have favored flat areas; "as a consequence [of unsupported traditional practices and the global market], any decline in the profitability levels of olive oil production will especially affect those production systems that depend less on irrigation, consume less fertilizers and pesticides, have less erosional impact, are configured by historical trees, have more labour requirements, and are able to follow strategies to produce more added value in rural areas" (Viladomiu and Rosell, 41). Traditional plantations in Spain received 97.50 euros per hectare while intensive plantations received 975. Even though costs for the former are significantly lower, sales were also disproportionately lower- 150 euros/ha versus 1,950 euros/ha annually. A study conducted by the Technical College of Agricultural Engineers in Madrid found that the smallest olive plantations in the southern EU states, those which were the most favorable to the health of local ecosystems, suffered a net annual loss of 402.50 euros per hectare while the farms that had the most negative impact had an annual profit of 1,378 (Euromed Sustainable Connections, 2008).

The abandonment of SMOPs which inevitably results increases the threat of flooding and fire as well as the consequent erosion from these natural calamities. Fire risk is especially high amongst abandoned groves due to the oil content of unpicked fruits and the steep slopes that encourage wildfire spread. The spontaneous establishment of fire-prone pine trees increases in abandoned areas, also making these areas less accessible to firefighters. Approximately 5,500,000 square meters of olive groves (100,000 trees), 500 hives, 300 sheep/goats, and 70,000,000 square meters of grazing land were lost in Laconia to the wildfires in 2007 (Tzintzina/com/history.goritsa). Some local residents believe that the subsequent lack of water management since the closing of water-powered grain mills has contributed to water scarcity and further encouraged the fires that severely damaged forests in the Paronias and Taigetos mountains that year. Few initiatives support traditional low-density olive groves with an understory used for growing cereals, vines, or for grazing, rain-fed terraces which reduce flooding and erosion or the effective water management hiding in these 'outmoded' practices.

The 'Routes of the Olive Tree', inspired by the work of George Karabatos, the executive director and president of the Messinia chamber of commerce in Greece, is a UNESCO 'major cultural route', like wine roads across Europe, and highlights cultural heritage embedded in traditional olive plantations. 'Routes' is seen as a tool for "intercultural dialogue, rapprochement of cultures, sustainable development, cultural tourism, and European integration" and to "repair Europe", "recover" or "restore memory" and "restore continuity" (culture-roots.lu/php/fo_index.php?lng=en). Yet the nearly renovated *eliotrives*, or olive mills that one encounters across the Peloponnese remain so. The historical museum of Goritsa, once famous for its oil, never opened during the eighteen months my wife and I lived there. Despite the mention of olive roads in literature, on maps, and on the web, multifunctionality, heritage, and sustainable development lying along these roads remain largely unsupported and thus ostensibly mere rhetoric.

At the Goritsa *kafeneion* one day, some men were talking about how a few Greeks in the north were beginning to farm olives mechanically, in rows with mechanical harvesters like the Spanish. Due to the topography of the Peloponnese farmers generally don't have the option to farm in this manner, even if they had continuous non-fragmented fields and were willing to uproot old trees and plant new ones in formulaic rows. They laughed, referring to themselves as the shepherds of the olive industry, milking their

trees by hand and gestured as if they were masturbating. The craft value of the kalamata table olive is in high demand according to Phil Meldrum at FoodMatch, a mid-size importer of Mediterranean foods in New York City (personal interview, 2010). Greece is in a great position, globally, says Meldrum. And the buying trips he and his partners at supermarkets such as Wegmans and Whole Foods make to Laconia are typically the highlights of their European tours. Yet this craft value does not make its way to most olive farmers. While mechanization and production volume is certainly an obstacle to certain kinds of financial stability, Bourdieu's habitus is another, as goods not only reflect distinction but become instruments of it vis-à-vis a taste for 'unfiltered', 'organic', 'coldpressed', 'artisan', 'extra virgin' olive oil or 'kalamata' olives which benefit only those who define the economic parameters for their consumption.

New immigrants in rural Europe

The Mediterranean countries have also been referred to as a caravanserai for migrant groups and flows (Ribas-Mateos). As the most 'underdeveloped' of the Southern EU countries, Greece also has the most immigrants. While hard to quantify, especially in rural areas, as the registrar at the former Molaios municipality explained to me; "there's a lot! That's not easy. It's like 50% now!" In fact, there have been approximately one hundred births per year in Molaios (almost 50%) to non-Greek parents for the past ten years. While xenophobia is admittedly a problem, the sentiment expressed to me in 2009 by one municipal school official in a nearby village is shared by many; 'how can we have development if we don't have any young people here? You'd think that given the fact that the population of children has been maintained largely by the influx of foreign families people would encourage them'. Schools largely remain open due to the children of immigrants, in Crete and in Epirus (Kasimis, 2007) as well as in Laconia. While Greece consistently has the lowest naturalization rates in Europe, immigrant workers are increasingly integral to its cultural reproduction. Officials I've spoken with at the ΠΕΠ and other agencies believe that *laikes* or farmers markets will remain, for example, but that Greeks will not be selling there in the near future. Immigrants will continue to move into these socioeconomic spaces as they become inherent constituents of rural Greece.

In Albania, a remittance country with the highest migration flow in Europe (five times the average for developed countries (Kosta)) many have chosen a strategy of ex-locality for survival. As parents were urged to give their children Illyrian^{iv} sounding names during the communist period, it has since become common, especially amongst families in the south and who have historical connections with Greece to give children Hellenic or Greek-sounding names. Some aspects of historical, socio-economic, *kurbet*^v ties with Greece and other Balkan countries have reemerged in the post-socialist period (Papailias, Nitsiakos). As jobs in Athens have become scarce, many immigrants have taken to the countryside. Most immigrants insist that accommodations in rural areas are better for non-Greeks.

S.B. Sutton (254) suggests that anthropologists build on concepts such as 'multiple ties' or 'many-stranded coalitions' (Wolf 81-85) in order to explain cultural reproduction in such a context. 'Neighborliness' or 'mutual help' (*allilovoithia*), friendliness, wedding sponsorship and the inclusion of non-kin in traditional practices, taken together, become significant. Favoring strangers over kin in agricultural areas becomes less problematic when there are no kin to distribute land to. Skills and work capacities immigrants possess can become more important than religion. Permanently settled families, regardless of their ethnic or national background, become preferable to seasonal residents and depopulation (Koutsouris, et. al.).

Migrant entrepreneurship, sustainability, and heritage in Greek countryside

At least 10% of the seasonal agricultural workforce in Europe is made up of immigrants. That nearly 100% of agricultural labor in Greece is now done by immigrants is further testament of the need to incorporate migration policy more significantly into the CAP and its affiliates. Kasimis (2009b) notes that "most member states have few policies designed to attract, admit, and benefit systematically from the work of migrants". This is especially unfortunate as immigrants often pioneer entrepreneurship. Barth considers entrepreneurship a process unfolding between environmental constraints and the strategic implementation of actions that modify and change environmental conditions themselves, sometimes constituting 'resistance'. Niches are the entrepreneur's assets and immigrants have been drawn to them.

Latino farmers in the US often perceive landscapes, profit, farming, etc. in different ways than their Anglo counterparts. They typically grow a different set of crops, use less technology, and avoid USDA subsidized commodities like corn, soybean, wheat, and cotton. They can be more family-oriented, pluriactive, relying on exchanges between friends. They utilize unconventional information networks allowing for unconventional farm developments. As a result, social networks based on different kinds of socio-cultural, economic, and ethnic contexts emerge. Some have well-developed ties with Mexican and Mexican-American growers, brokers and clients, grow Mexican corn varieties as their principal crop, and handpick it. These divergent strategies have allowed many to make successful transitions from farm laborer to farm ownership. With less reliance on traditional lending systems and with less of a debt load, their presence in this industry is relatively secure (Vásquez-Leon). Despite certain vulnerabilities specific to them and while the overall number of farms in the US has declined, the number of Latino farmers has grown as have their ties to traditionally non-Latino farming communities (García-Pabón). Immigrants have long been considered capable of revitalizing socially 'dead' places and crippled economic industries

(Psimmenos). Greek refugees from Asia Minor in the early 1920's were more willing to use modern methods and fertilizers than local Greeks at the time. They improved seeds, introduced new crops to the mainland, and inaugurated malaria control in swamps they helped drain (Sanders, 293). In fact, olive terracing on the island of Lesbos, the kind of intangible heritage that today is at risk, began in 1923 with the Greek/Turkish population exchange and the plethora of working hands that suddenly arrived as a result. It is little wonder that such intangible rural landscape heritage survives today in the hands of new immigrants.

Amongst the many socio-economic roles that new migrants play in the Greek countryside today, we see the revival of collective shepherding (Kasimis, 2007), traditional stone building, the maintenance of historic olive groves- the provisions for the ability to maintain traditional ways of life in the face of fast capitalism, "contributing to the conservation of the rural landscape" (Kasimis, 2009a:55). Older Greeks complain that it has become hard to get traditional supplies, such as *fouski*, or manure. Albanians have recently begun selling *fouski* in Goritsa and elsewhere. In the municipality of Molaios there are approximately fifty immigrant farmers and sharecroppers. In the winter of 2010, four had submitted applications to the Young Farmer Program. Even they are careful, if also unable to expand like some of their Greek counterparts have in the past, not to implement wage labor and various inputs and become victims of the vulnerabilities associated with the costs of expansion (Kasimis, 2007).

As this entrepreneurship unfolds immigrants engage in 'exchanges of feeling', vis-à-vis structures of feeling, in agriculture (Seremetakis, 144). Southeastern European immigrants with prior experience with similar landscapes, crops, machinery and other rural artifacts develop significant ties with Greece and Greeks. Yiam, a new traditional Greek food company that specializes in the nascent interest in food heritage, pickles and sells *volvoi*, wild hyacinth bulbs imported from Italy as there is no comparable Greek supplier. Once avidly collected by Greeks, Greek *volvoi* are now being gathered by Eastern European or Balkan immigrants familiar with the wild crop and willing to undertake the difficult labor. It is now typical for Albanians to import and cultivate 'Greek' trees- olive trees from Chalkidiki and peach and apple trees from Pella. Some sell their products in their home countries as 'Greek' with added value. A transnational agriculture has developed as a result of these transnational rural livelihoods; "what we have observed up to the present is an interesting interdependence among repeated moves, remittances, the rural origins of workers in agriculture and the development of their agricultural holdings" (Labrianidis and Sykas, 49). Until recently, jokes often made by local Greek residents in Laconia- that they would all be eating Albanian olive oil in the future or that rural Laconia might become a 'little Albania'- were simply that; "learn Albanian now", people often say, "so that you'll know how to pronounce your boss's name". Such statements have taken on new meaning. Evangelos Vergos admitted that, while he laments selling his ancestral farmland to non-Greeks, most importantly it is back in cultivation.

As farming in Europe's future becomes based on ecological capital, migrant farmers in Greece offer a new and logical embedding of small-scale farming as part of a new rural development paradigm. The largest industrial farm operations in the most 'advanced' parts of Europe represent, to van der Ploeg (2008), the weakest links. Pluriactivity, once only for the periphery should now be seen as the new rural model and new forms of cooperation between local residents and immigrants must result. By virtue of being left out of conventional markets and pushed to look elsewhere rather than remain subject to traditional forms of economic dependency, immigrants are de facto entrepreneurs.

In the course of my fieldwork in Laconia prefecture, I met dozens of non-Greek farmers I consider in this entrepreneurial light, those who are undermining stereotypes of Greek xenophobia and myths of their own inabilities to integrate into Greek society as well as co-constructing an organic resistance to historical stagnation in the countryside. Having lived in Greece for approximately twenty years, most now have families and are establishing roots in many domains of social, economic, political, and cultural life. Some speak Greek at home with their children and are baptized by Greek neighbors. They increasingly own their own farms, tractors, and storerooms. Most are members of local agricultural cooperatives. Some sell at *laikes* while others have become merchants in their own right. They might supplement their incomes by opening up their own *kafeneia* or tending beehives. They reconstruct traditional buildings. They engage in *allaxies*, cooperative labor exchanges with Greeks which until recently only occurred between agnatic or cognatic kin. The exigencies of traditional agricultural system make these kinds of demands.



Figure 1. Ioannis, from Moldova, has diligently reconstructed the ipogeo, or wine cellar in the old house he has bought and restored. Ioannis' brother explained to me how Ioannis has accomplished so much; "the Greeks complain that things are so hard here. Whatever you want to do you can do. You just need the patience to do it".

Limited in their resources, immigrants typically harvest in the *palia tropos*, in the old way, handpicking without using pesticides and thus producing some of the best, organic, extra virgin olive oil in the country without any of the certification or 'distinction'. They tend to meticulously maintain the olive groves of families whose children have either died or moved away. Dimitris, an Albanian sharecropper who tended the fields of an old woman two doors down from us in Goritsa, often sat with her in the late afternoon. She viscerally expressed discontent with the current state of affairs between Greek people as compared to the context in which she grew up three quarters of a century ago; "they'll take your eyes out, one from the other". In the same breath she prized 'her Albanian'. While such linguistic phenomena certainly reflects the marginalization, persecution, or commodification of new Albanian immigrants, their relationship also represents well the phenomenon of replacement migration whereby new immigrants are becoming a large portion of the necessary population of new farmers.

Pioneers like Ioannis and Dimitris serve as role models for other immigrants looking to also take advantage of opportunities, those that exist as a result of Greek disinterest in rural agro-pastoral work and the relatively much worse state of affairs in their home countries. Steadfast in their work ethics, non-Greeks are often as capable of generating income that exceeds expenses, especially during a difficult year, as subsidized Greek farmers with more trees and technology to manage.



Figure 2. (Mitsos, an Albanian, with his son Danielle on his tractor) Mitsos believes that national irredentist campaigns such as Greece's Megali Ithea or a Greater Albania no longer have any meaning; "what do I care about these kinds of ideologies" he said to me in 2010. A place we often worked is called 'Mitsos tou Poros', as Mitsos' koumbaros, or spiritual kin explained. Poros was the generic name of the area. Noteworthy was the fact that it was the first time that I had heard mention of a placename which indicated possession by a new immigrant.

Many SMOP's of Laconian LFA's have become virtual forests over the years. Immigrant farmers typically prune to create light and airy groves so as to encourage fruit production, avoiding the need for increasing amounts of water, a scarce resource. Many burned groves from the fires in the village of Sellasia in 1988, as well as houses in this and other areas have been reclaimed from overgrown maquis by immigrants.



Figure 3. Nikos, from Ukraine, grafts new stock onto burned stumps in Sellasia while his granddaughter looks on. His son, Sergei is one of only ten young men currently farming in Sellasia.

While these individuals and their families contribute much towards Greek farming and rural heritage, they also help to establish a foundation for a European/transnational agrarian space, exporting not only *tenakethes* of oil to friends and family or product for sale, but olive trees themselves.



Figure 4. (Billis' business card identifying him, an Albanian, as a merchant of Laconian Olive oil produced from trees he has brought from employers in Greece to his home in Albania)

In sum these individuals are pluriactive and this fact makes them particularly suitable to the future of European countrysides, developing significant relations with shepherds and other ruralites, reconstructing the traditional *xorio* (village) in spiritual as well as material form. *Me xenia cheria then yinetaj*, "with foreign hands, nothing happens", Nikos, my Ukrainian friend perhaps ironically explained to me one day on his farm. His are the new 'Greek' hands salvaging the tangible and intangible heritage of Laconian SMOPs for all of Europe. Some believe that, unlike Greeks, Albanians and other new immigrants have yet to learn how to emulate the West in an inferior manner, plastering over their own 'backwardness', be it embodied by stone building facades, manure, the labor entailed in the collection of wild hyacinth bulbs, or terraced olive groves (personal interview, Carole Barkas, 2011). Regardless, the time has come to green this backwardness cum heritage, striving to bridge the gaps between those who produce it and those who know it.

Sustainable developments

On new global migrations and agriculture, Simard and Jentsch ask "what opportunities does the host country offer for the construction of a new rural multi-ethnic society?" (11). Here we also ask what opportunities do immigrant farmers offer the host country in the way of sustainable development and the protection of rural heritage? The exchange of skills, in farming in this case, can be considered an expression of core values, "less reciprocity than a reflection of the working flow of the social mechanism" (D. Sutton, 50). While Sutton refers to the bridge that is created through the handling of food in the kitchen amongst different generations of Greek women, I suggest that such a bridge between different ethnicities and nationalities is also emerging. I also suggest that a revitalization of European agricultural/rural space is taking place in the process.

Systems that synthesize restaurants, tourist sites, as well as agri-businesses and cooperatives for the purposes of rural development do not exist in Greece for the most part. Olive roads like the nascent wine roads have only recently begun to attract minor attention in the Peloponnese. 'Clusters' like these may make Greek countrysides more viable- a monoculture of isolated individual farmers and businesspeople is certainly doomed. More diverse kinds of agricultural production (focusing on different local olive varieties and organic methods for example) in conjunction with a general diversification of the countryside can dovetail with environmental programs that premise the ecological value of Laconia. The new national park of Parnonas Mountain, as with the mountainous terrain of Taigetos in this prefecture represents the newfound additional value that this particular rural area might some day enjoy. Future-oriented agronomists in municipal offices drive at these connections when asked what can be done. Unfortunately, in Laconia such agronomists are rare. Some farmers have begun organic cultivation and a

few now grow aromatic plants for essential oils as a diversification strategy. But the Greek countryside by and large remains caught between calls to intensify and multifunctionalize. Cutting down 2000-year-old olive trees undermines heritage and sustainability incentives as a hopeless attempt to find success within an ideology of the bygone era of modernization and development. Such was the case in Holland not too long ago, as illustrated by the poster slogan about certain orchard trees which once circulated in rural areas there- *te duuv om an te howden rooien* ,‘too expensive to keep up: uproot them!’ (van der Ploeg, 2003:131).

The costly removal of such historic trees and wooded banks in rural Holland has slowed as they now represent cultural and ecological capital (van der Ploeg, 2003:132). Some ‘black swans’, the small farms that had been considered dead and dying, have grown, van der Ploeg points out. They are now hidden novelties; “large farms come to a halt or stagnate at times too. No watershed exists in this respect. The notion of a farm that is too small, with no other option than closure is therefore a virtual image that does not correspond with the world as it is... [it] is an artefact, it is a construction created and reproduced by the Ministry of Agriculture as expert system” (2003:258, 263). Van der Ploeg predicts the overall demise of such ‘expert systems’, that people engaged in real innovation are increasingly forced to ignore them.

The question remains as to what Laconia’s ‘development repertoire’ might be (Ray, 4), what the possibilities for resistance and opportunities for sustainable, endogenous, and non-exclusionary development might be. Most of Greece and parts of some other Mediterranean European countries still suffer from expert systems and global hierarchies of rural value. As immigrant integration continues, and as immigrant settlers in rural areas take up the entrepreneurial reins in ignoring the institutions and systems of bygone eras, if also inadvertently by virtue of their marginalized positions, we have the opportunity to visualize Greek rural/agricultural heritage, one that celebrates a Greek rurality worthy of Athena or as in the time of Hesiod. These futures are envisioned by a few Greek entrepreneurs but also by some Albanians, Moldovans, and other non-Greek farmers who are pioneering unconventional perspectives. Vis-à-vis such visions, sustainable development emerges as a potential mediating ethno-ecological model for globalized yet ‘stagnant’ countrysides of the EU. Emplaced in the Greek environment (Hastrup, 2009) immigrants reap Greek heritage, tangible, edible, and intangible and implicitly ask us to bridge the gap between being and knowing.

Endnotes

ⁱ Retsina wine is a pine resinated white or rose wine indigenous to Greece and protected as an EU PDO but not currently appreciated by mainstream wine connoisseurs.

ⁱⁱ Community supported Agriculture is a locally-based socio-economic model of agriculture and food distribution. Consumers pay local farms up front, providing farmers with necessary liquidity. Growers and consumers share the risks and benefits of food production.

ⁱⁱⁱ Care farming reorients farms towards the inclusion of therapeutic care of vulnerable groups of people as a supplemental goal of farming practices.

^{iv} Illyrians are the ancient tribe centered in the western Balkans to which modern Albanians have traditionally traced their ancient, and thus national origins.

^v *Kurbet*, a Turkish word, refers to the temporary settlement in foreign lands. During the Ottoman period, Albanians were the most migratory of Ottoman subjects. As they still are the most migratory in the Balkans or Southeastern Europe, the word carries with it proportionate significance in contemporary Albania despite the fact that new terminology referring to new kinds of migration and refuge-seeking have also emerged.

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