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TOURISM IMPACTS ON LOCAL LIFE: SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN CRETE

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Öz

Bu makalenin amacı, güncel turizm çalışmaları ve sosyal bilimler bağlamında turizmin yerel toplumlardaki etkisini değerlendirmeye yönelik sürmekte olan gereksinime işaret etmektir. Makale, değişimin başlıca aktörünü turizmin oluşturduğu yerlerde, “mekânın yeni kültürel ekonomisi” süreci ile sosyo-mekânsal dönüşümüne ilişkin yerel bakış açılarının anlaşılmasına katkı sağlamayı hedeflemektedir. Girit’teki alan araştırması, mekânın bu yeni kültürel ekonomisinin yerel toplumlar üzerindeki izlerini, Girit’in kuzeyindeki Hersonissos bölgesindeki yerel halkın bu değişime ilişkin anlayışlarını mülakatlar yoluyla ortaya koyarak incelemektedir. Genel anlamda, incelenen toplulukların kültürel ve sosyal rolleri, yapıları ve değerleri değişime daha dirençliyen, ekonomik pratikler ve yaşam tarzları ise kentsel ve Batılı bir dönüşüme daha yatkın görünmektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: *yerel kalkınma, kıyı turizmi, sosyo-kültürel değişim, yerel halkın bakış açısı, Hersonissos, Girit*

Abstract

The objective of this article is to address the ongoing need to assess the impact of tourism on local societies, in the context of contemporary tourism studies and social sciences. It seeks to contribute to an understanding of local perceptions of socio-spatial transformation through processes of a “new cultural economy of space”—in cases where tourism constitutes the major agent of change. The case study in Crete explores the imprint of this new cultural economy of space on local societies, by laying out their understanding of such change through interviews with locals in the wider region of Hersonissos in northern Crete. Generally speaking, cultural and social roles, structures and values of the communities under study emerge from this empirical research as more resistant to change, whereas economic practices and lifestyles seem to be more susceptible to a transformation in favor of an urban, Western way of life.

Key words: *local development, coastal tourism, socio-cultural change, local perceptions, Hersonissos, Crete*

Introduction

Forces of geographical transformation are nowadays acquiring new dimensions, properties and directions, invariably reflected and imprinted upon the societies they affect. Social scientists and scholars of several provenances and affiliations have long been negotiating processes of spatial change, the unfolding “new cultural economy of space” (Terkenli 2002, Terkenli and d’Hauteserre 2006). The “new (global) cultural economy of space” is conceptualized as a cultural but still very much profit motivated, in the broader sense of the term, renegotiation of space. It constitutes a socio-cultural negotiation and interpretation of newly-emerging spatial patterns, relationships and impacts (Terkenli 2006). Places and landscapes have always been organized on the basis of specific cultural economies of (time-space. The much debated novelty of most of these forces, factors and processes of change notwithstanding, contemporary change is occurring at a much more rapid pace than in the past. It often materializes in new forms and shapes; it generates new mental, affective and symbolic schemata. Most importantly, however, it develops structures and functions of spatial organization that transcend previous sectoral interconnections around the globe, as in the markedly uneven functional integration of globally dispersed activities and networks. As such, it especially applies to tourism. Though present for at least several decades, these

tendencies (internationalization, integration, networking, etc) are of a qualitatively different nature than in the past. As capital seeks ever more locations where to raise profits, processes of this new cultural economy of space affect all Western, at least, world, but they appear most strikingly in contemporary tourist destinations.

In the context of tourism studies and social sciences, this article addresses the ongoing need to assess the impact of tourism on local societies, so far not adequately investigated in a qualified way, at specific geographical locations. It seeks to contribute to an understanding of local perceptions of socio-spatial transformation, unfolding in tourist destinations through processes of a “new cultural economy of space”—in cases where tourism constitutes the major agent of change. Far from presenting a comprehensive, sophisticated model for cultural change, this article explores the imprint of this new cultural economy of space on local societies by laying out, with the aid of empirical material from Crete, the understanding of such change by local societies.

Theoretical context of the study

The empirical and ideological expansion of modern [and postmodern] society is intimately linked in diverse ways to modern [and postmodern] mass leisure, especially to international tourism and sightseeing (MacCannell 1976:1,3; *author’s additions in brackets*). Exploding and imploding patterns of recreation

and tourism are altering the face of the world and of the landscape. New structures, values and processes in recreation and public life are increasingly modifying the landscape, often leading to irreversible change in the pre-existing landscape. Newer cultural forms, belonging to the realm of either high or popular culture tend to engulf, promote and overtake more «traditional» forms of culture, while rendering them amenable to mass production and consumption, through new articulations of desire and attraction. Phenomena such as these evolve on the basis of new complex spatial schemata which are intricately connected to globalizing trends, the complex processes whereby production and consumption and the modes of existence and experience they generate serve to undermine some aspects of local cultural distinctiveness, while reinforcing other (Haralambopoulos and Pizam 1996; Johnson and Snepenger 1994).

Place identity undergoes continuous renegotiation and transformation in time, space and context, while in doing so requires, as any production or reproduction of identity, the juxtaposition of other analogous place identities on the basis of geographical difference. It is thus essential to the development of a tourism industry or destination. Place identity—the most significant factor and mechanism of tourism attraction—becomes endangered by this ongoing transformation in tourism destinations worldwide. In the geographical discipline, place identity construction, reconstruction, preservation and change are currently conceptualized as depending on distinctive attributes and relationships that gain expression to a different degree in each particular case, along cultural and subjective lines (Cresswell 1996, Entrikin 1991, Donald 1988, Agnew 1987, Lowenthal 1961), thus dictating a place in national consciousness, in the local minds or sense of community or in the tourism industry. Until recently, place identity used to be articulated in the context of a particular socio-economic system embracing and expressing the local dynamic of land and life. The increasing porousness of temporal and spatial barriers and the explosion in movement and interconnectivity in the Western

world wrought great fragmentation, differentiation, conformity and/ or complexity both between and within what formerly used to be more distinctive and homogeneous places and landscapes. The latter today tend to concentrate all possible amenities and attractions from around the world, condensing and potentially encompassing many previously existing worlds in a single place.

According to the theoretical framework presented above, such processes of the new cultural economy of space compress and develop—in one location—a complex and highly attractive and discordant mix of old and new, familiar and different, all produced and consumed in situ provided that “it sells” (Terkenli 2006). They contribute to the general disruption or even dismantling of local social norms, structures and practices that conventional tourism and second-home development traditionally brings about. They are thus not amenable to the social sustainability of the local host communities of the Mediterranean (Tsartas, 1996). Spatial and social (kinship, life-cycle, community, occupation etc.) boundaries become disassociated from one another or irrelevant with such large-scale land (use) alterations. These changes imply the loss of valuable sociocultural capital and agricultural economic structures and functions in host communities and surrounding areas.

Among the primary features of the Mediterranean environment, Selwin especially highlights the blend of natural and cultural heritage, ‘the true wealth of the Mediterranean basin’. As Grenon and Batisse admonish, here exists “a common stock of attitudes and behavior with deep cultural and religious roots... Very rapid technological, economic, demographic and social changes in the region in the past half century—of which the growth of tourism and tourism-related development has played a substantial role—have placed the environment of the region under threat” (Selwin, 2000: 241-2). The long on-going spread of tourism along Mediterranean coasts has been contributing to the radical disruption of inland agricultural economies. “The polyculture, mixed agriculture, characteristic of the historical

Mediterranean, has, to a large extent, been replaced by the mono-crop of tourism” (Selwin, 2000: 227). This transformation consists not only of the marginalization of inland areas through the absorption of human, natural and cultural resources by the coasts. It has also proceeded to change hinterland land uses, according to profit principles externally imposed, on land that is treated as vacant or non-significant, simply on the basis of no direct use to 3S’s tourism. Once again, control and organization of space is at issue here, where the monocrop of tourism tends to draw tourism destinations into different kinds of dependency on centers elsewhere (Palmer, 2004).

With the aid of ethnographic methodology, this article examines precisely how these processes of change at work are perceived, experienced and received by the residents of the region of Hersonissos, a Mediterranean tourism destination in northern Crete.

Cretan society: a place of many histories and geographies

In postwar Greece, “modernization” and “development” have been defined mostly in economic terms. Economic development, of a quasi-capitalist character, unfolded on the basis of a mainly agrarian society, despite its potential for significant development stimulus from its membership in the European Union and from its large tourism industry. Alongside many facets and factors of Greece’s idiosyncratic economic development, major long-term cultural particularities, such as clientelism and patronage, have been responsible for an atrophic civil society (Demertzis 1997:110) with serious repercussions on community life (Legg and Roberts 1997: 72). The overwhelming importance of the state, in comparison to other social institutions, together with a sustained market orientation, fortified by prevailing social structures and institutions, serves to strengthen these ties even further. This is a reality that, as we shall see, Cretans especially and vehemently resist, on the basis of a conception of their communities as a kind of small state, thus sustaining a long tradition of defiant independently

ways of life. Nonetheless, Greek—and Cretan—economy has adhered to free-market principles and has remained subject to larger economic forces directly affecting growth, productivity and development. Certain older pre-existing cultural schemata, instead of acting as barriers to these cultural challenges, actually encourage the passage to new values and ways of life. For instance, the traditional primacy in Greek rural society of exchange and of marketplace skills emerges as a crucial feature in the lives of all contemporary Greeks (McNeill 1978) and has greatly accommodated Greece’s general eagerness to fit, so to speak, the Western economic development model. Since modern urban life also tends to make the nuclear family the primary unit of consumption and mutuality, these rural cultural patterns were readily transferred to Greek cities.

While the unintended consequence of the imposition of Western institutions was to create conditions that in essence reinforced some traditional institutions and values (Legg and Roberts 1997), other traditional institutions and values have been increasingly threatened by these processes of acculturation. For instance, on the basis of economically rather than culturally induced changes, Zinovieff (1991) suggests that profoundly gendered practices such as the importance of marital arrangements and the dowry system have lost little of their significance in Crete. Most resistant ramparts of the old ways of life have been the nuclear family and the Greek Orthodox Church (McNeill 1978; Karapostolis 1983). Change is slow to come to Crete, where the extended family unit still holds strong as the central point of reference and allegiance, while the church remains on the whole the unequivocal guarantor of traditional society and is as opposed to modernization—today, as it was early last century. As the older generation gradually disappears, however, secular Western values are likely to predominate (Legg and Roberts 1997). Legg and Roberts suggest a way to examine cultural continuity by noting cultural elements that seem antithetical to modernization: the importance of the family for protection, social insurance and comfort; the distrust of outsiders; the emphasis on

oral rather than written communication; self-esteem bound up in the concept of “*philotimo*”; the separation of male and female roles; a relaxed attitude toward time (1997: 107-8). For the purposes of our discussion, these elements may be grouped into two categories: on the one hand, structures and values, and, on the other, practices and ways of life. However, any analysis of changes affecting any tourism region must follow a multifaceted perspective, where the official and the informal, as well as the geographical and the historical, emerge inextricably entwined.

Since the late 1970s--early 1980s, when Crete experienced one of the fastest rates of growth in Greece in terms of mass tourism inflow (Chiotis and Coccossis 2000), it has remained first in Greece in terms of tourism revenues. The prefecture of Herakleion, and more specifically its northern coastal axis, have retained their predominant position in terms of tourism concentration (Koussis 2000:101), with all possible adverse effects on the society and the environment (Briassouli and Sofoulis 1995, Coccossis and Parpairis 1986, Koussis 2000). One factor that can certainly not be underestimated in opening the ground both for tourism and for broader development is the transformation that cheap air travel brought to Greece, and especially to the islands. Before Heraklion airport was built in the early 1960's, Hersonissos had changed little since the early years of the century: patterns of agriculture were beginning to be affected by Common Market contracts, but traditional ways of life survived in the mountains sustained by summer grazing, while few people lived on the coast—as life there was considered unsatisfactory, potentially dangerous and unCretan (Pettifer, 1993).

Contemporary Crete has since urbanized fast. In effect, there has been a mass population exodus from the interior of the island to the larger cities and tourist resorts of the coastal zone. In terms of its geography, the coastal areas of the Hersonissos region have been much altered by tourism and development in recent years, whereas the interior hinterland has been affected by the same forces in

roughly inverse proportion to its distance from the coast, measured in terms of accessibility and contact (Terkenli 2001). The same relationship as in coast-interior is discernible between city and village, roughly representative of respectively more and less “modern” ways of life. Extended families ensure that their rural and urban components remain in regular contact and thus the ties between the two are preserved at all costs. Villages and towns function inseparably and interactively. “Each is situated within the other’s experience; each claims an identity that at once incorporates and rejects the self-image of the other” (Herzfeld 1991a:24), through a dialectical relationship that informs local identity with much ambiguity and contradiction.

In general, identity and loyalty take the shape of concentric circles (Herzfeld 1985:xii). However, the identification of local with national interests has been gaining ground, as newspapers and other media bring to the village a consciousness of playing a part in international politics: Cretan resistance to the implementation of EEC agricultural policy, for example, while at odds with the stance of the government in power, removed the level of debate to that of regional and national identities (Herzfeld 1985:271). Meanwhile, the bureaucratic state endorses a pyramidal or hierarchical model of political relations (Herzfeld 1985: xi) and the clientage network remains necessary and useful, especially so for rural Cretans. For Cretans, imbued with the mythical perception that the divine and the heroic are synonymous with Crete and its inhabitants (Giakoumaki 1992:18), these are decidedly profound changes. Consequently, Cretans of the larger region of Hersonissos strive to get on with the comforting ordinariness of their everyday lives: “Their day-to-day concerns obliterate -- physically and conceptually-- the contested history of the official and touristic world, while their personal and familial histories have an immediacy that counts for a good deal more” (Herzfeld 1991a:259).

With regard to local social roles and structures, as elsewhere in Greece, the religiously sanctified

union of marriage forms the very basis of personhood (Loizos and Papataxiarchis 1991:221): “according to the conjugal model of gender, then, gender and kinship mix in the definition of the person, and in the same context the sexual identity of women is subordinated to their kinship role as mothers and guardians of the domestic order” (1991:223). Although personhood for men may also be attained through exchanges of friendship and other social association that involve members of the same sex, kinship generally appears as the primary symbol of personhood. Cretan women have traditionally appeared, in ethnographic literature, as either submissively silent or dangerously garrulous—symbolisms or personifications in the characters of Virgin Mary and Eve (Herzfeld 1991b; du Boulay 1986). Appearing outwardly, “to be guarding their sexuality in an entirely proper way, [they] are also bearing witness to the paradox inherent in the very concept of the household: that the housewife has authority in this interior domain, which acquires meaning through its defensive and contrastive juxtaposition with the public world” (Herzfeld 1991b:92). In this context, Herzfeld also emphasizes effective cunning and deceit, as important aspects of the female stereotype. While Cretan women still appear in more traditional contexts to accept and uphold the dominant values, they use discourse (“loghos”) in very powerful ways in occasions of private association, i.e. voicing social criticism and an often severe critique of men. Increasing participation in family decision-making and the possibility of increased autonomy for women in our days (Koussis 1989) stands in sharp contrast to the fact that traditionally women were expected to not voice opinions “and constantly and curtly told by their husbands and fathers, “Mi milas (do not speak!)” (Herzfeld 1991b:96).

Moreover, decisions that might be made by individuals or nuclear families are often made by extended families. Thus, current growth of transportation and communication facilities makes visitation and verbal contact possible, serving the maintenance of family ties and certain traditional values over geographic and social distance. In fact,

the whole region’s prospects of sustainability, change and development rest on the various patterns of village-town inter-relationships. On this basis are constructed the geographies of Cretan identity at various scales from the local to the national, imprinted by the weight of personal and collective history and undergoing profound, albeit slow, change with tourism and “development”. Finally, Cretan culture embodies the depth of its long historical past in various structures and processes (dialects, “mandinadhes”, myths, fairy tales, riddles, proverbs, songs, and various customs, as well as arts and crafts), some of which are now going through a period of pronounced regeneration, development and growth (Giakoumaki 1992; Brillaki-Kavakopoulou 1992), stimulated by the explosion in tourism and the opening up of the island to the world at large.

Hersonissos, Crete: the research design and setting

This case study represents an exploration of the ways and mechanisms through which a broad range of such processes of “development” have been shaping place in the Hersonissos region of Northern Crete (Map 1). It is a study of how people negotiate the reality and sense of a place undergoing rapid change, “about situating moral identity, about battling the form and future of the physical environment, about shoring up familiar cultural spaces against the encroaching, encompassing strangeness of larger worlds” (Herzfeld 1991a:24). The research was undertaken in the context of a larger interdisciplinary project on the sustainable development of Hersonissos region, with a focus on issues and changes that have come about as a result of development and tourism (The Sustainable Development Group Report 2000). The authors conducted structured interviews with local residents, with the purpose of investigating and deciphering the impact of such change on individuals, families and the social structures and dynamics of the surveyed communities. The survey sample consisted mainly of individuals who happened to be in the village during the day of the researchers’ visit, or who

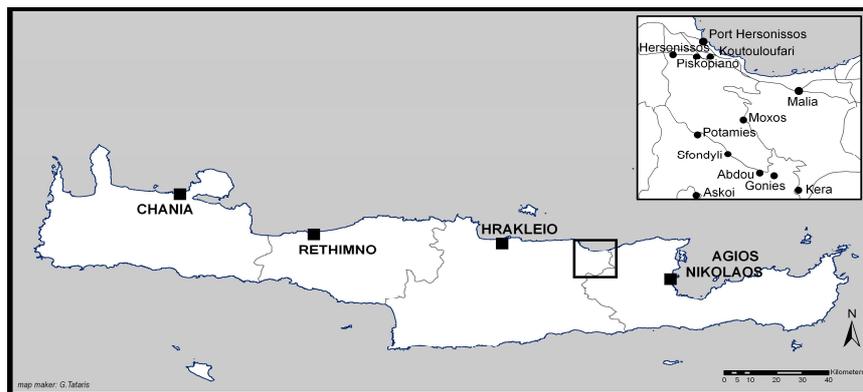
were outdoors and willing to participate in the survey. It is consequently comprised largely of older residents (mostly female) and youth, as well as shopkeepers. Middle-aged adults, particularly men, are underrepresented in it, because, at the time of the survey, they tended to be either employed elsewhere or engaged in agricultural activities in the surrounding countryside.

Interview questions were designed to gain an understanding of: the rhythms of every day life; the ties of the respondent to his or her village, the region, Crete and Greece; the extent of the

respondent's involvement in community decision-making; the ways in which the lives of the respondent and his or her family have changed as a result of development and tourism; and any such further changes that the respondent foresaw in the near future (Table 1). The interviews were tape-recorded with the respondent's permission, while a native-speaker translated the gist of the responses to the rest of the survey team, who kept detailed notes in the process.

Table 1. Interview Questionnaire

1. Describe a typical day of your life here.
2. What do you consider yourself as? How do you see yourself as part of your topos?
3. Describe the ways that development and tourism have affected your life, your family members' lives and your place.
4. What are your relationships with the tourists?
5. To what extent do you have a choice in changes (including the Kapodistrias Plan) related to development and tourism in your community and in this region?
6. What do you think your life will be like in ten years from now?



Map 1. Map of the Crete and the survey area

The main urban center of the survey area was (Port) Hersonissos, although the whole coastal stretch of the northern shore of Crete consists of a heavily urbanized, “developed” strip of leisure residences and tourism infrastructure. This stretch constitutes the segment of Crete most impacted by tourism and development, as eloquently described by Rackham and Moody: “We need not dwell on the uglification of Crete by hundreds of hotels, in a

foreign style of architecture, neither beautiful nor functional, which makes no concession to its surroundings. Some of the more recent architecture is better, but hotels still appear at random, often in the most inappropriate situations... Some have walled sea-fronts, which destroy (by marine erosion) the very beach on which their livelihood depends” (1996: 210). Further inland, about two kilometers from the

coastal town of Hersonissos, the villages of Old Hersonissos, Piscopiano and Koutoulafari are set in the hills with a view to the sea. Because of their close proximity to Hersonissos, these villages are much affected by tourism. However, despite the obvious presence of bars, hotels, resorts, noisy motor scooters, souvenir shops, and tourist buses, Old Hersonissos, Piscopiano and Koutoulafari retain much of the quaintness found in interior Cretan villages, but with somewhat more sparkle—the result of tourist dollars.

While Old Hersonissos boasts a steadily increasing population (1647 in 1991; up from 986 ten years earlier), the populations of Piscopiano and Koutoulafari are considerably smaller and declining (125 and 159, respectively, in 1981—1991 populations figures were incorporated in that for Port Hersonissos—National Statistical Service of Greece, 1998). Narrow streets, white-washed buildings, tavernas, churches, and houses with gated courtyards and a profusion of flowers provide a charming backdrop as villagers go about their daily lives seemingly oblivious to the infusion of seasonal tourists. Still further inland, are located our survey area's hinterland villages, Potamies, Sfindili, Avdou, Gonies and Kera; all but Kera are situated along the Aposelemis River. Like Piscopiano and Koutoulafari, these villages have suffered population declines over the past decades, the dual result of out-migration (especially of younger residents) and ageing populations. Although fairly close to the coast geographically, these interior villages are worlds apart from the coastal lifestyle. The impact of tourism here—if any—is relatively minor and indirect.

Geographies of everyday life

In order to get a glimpse of their daily activities and how these activities are organized around gender, age and geographic location, the respondents were first requested to describe their activities in a typical day.

In the villages, women are typically responsible for housework and meal preparation, as well as child care, while grandmothers often care for

grandchildren if daughters or daughters-in-law are employed. Women also tend gardens and any livestock on which the family relies for self-consumption. They fill any additional time with handicrafts, such as lace-making and embroidery, typically while socializing with neighbors and supervising children, all at the same time. Older ages generally tended to adhere more strictly to this traditional division of labor along gender lines.

Large-scale animal husbandry and farming tends to be work done by men in rural Crete, though other family members assist at critical times such as harvest. For example, women (and all able-bodied persons, including children) assist in the winter olive harvest, a labor-intensive and important economic activity for households. Olives and olives oil are not only consumed within households, but they often provide an important cash crop that supports the purchase of other needed household items. Aside from such economic activities, men appear to have few household responsibilities. After dinner, men are free to spend the evening with friends in tavernas or cafes, while traditional social mores dictate that women remain at home.

The few employed women with whom we spoke also appeared to follow traditional divisions of labor. However, our conversations with younger Cretans suggest that traditional gender stereotypes may be breaking down, no doubt due in part to media influences and, perhaps, to the influence of tourism as well. In the village of Gonies, two teenage girls, who had recently dropped out of school, insisted that there are no gender stereotypes among younger Cretans: "We do what the rest do." They said they were not interested in learning traditional handicrafts, and expressed their boredom with—what is in their view—the monotony of village life, due to a general lack of amenities. Both girls like to spend time in the village cafeteria, to visit the nearby water park and to watch television (American series). Although they plan to marry, they do not wish to do so in the village; instead, they plan to leave: learn English and work in the tourist industry.

Two young men, aged 18 and 19, from the same village, on the other hand, seemed to hold a more positive view of the village. They attended a technical school in Heraklion, planning to become an accountant and a paramedic. In addition to attending classes and studying, the two young men played basketball, soccer and backgammon and watched some TV—primarily athletic activities. Although they would most likely have to live in Heraklion in order to find work, they hoped to return to the village, at an older age: currently, there simply weren't enough employment opportunities available in the village. When asked about their perceptions of gender roles, the young men said that, while they don't deny or look down on traditions, they think some changes would be good. They didn't see a need for a clear division of gender roles, and thought it acceptable for women to go to bars and to work outside the home. However, when we asked who should look after children when both parents are employed, they responded "Grandmother." Thus, they appeared to expect more traditional behavior of older women (and probably men) than of younger ones. Like the two girls, these young men expressed no interest in learning traditional crafts. This disinterest is consistent with the concerns expressed by a local basket-maker who pointed out that, since no one wanted to learn his or other crafts, these traditions will consequently die along with the older generation. Younger Cretans from rural areas who have found employment in urban areas, however, often retain plots of land in their village of origin where they grow vegetables and olives. Thus, urban living does not necessarily alleviate women or men from agricultural activities.

In addition to gender, age and geographic location, religion is an important organizing factor of everyday life. Greek Orthodoxy, the near-universal religion in Crete, is replete with rituals and traditions that heavily influence social behavior. According to a local priest, "Greek Orthodox religion gives a way of understanding and looking at things", it sets a way of life. In addition to going to church on Sunday mornings, Cretans tend family graves on Saturday evenings. Women are responsible for cleaning the church; this set of

responsibilities is organized informally, on a volunteer basis. These women tend to be middle-aged or elderly, single or widowed, with few other social responsibilities. Generally speaking, Greek women tend to become more religiously-oriented with age, while serving on the church council is an exclusive male responsibility and right.

Finally, family ties play a crucial role in the lives of those with whom we spoke, to the point of the infamous "vendetta". Many adult children had moved from the villages to the coast (Hersonissos or Heraklion) in response to the economic opportunities there. Relatively small distances between Heraklion, Hersonissos, Old Hersonissos, Piscopiano, and Koutoulafari and the interior villages, allow for regular contact between family members. A ninety-one year old woman, for instance, prefers to spend summers at her own home in Koutoulafari, but spends all winters with one of her daughters in Hersonissos.

Identity and community

A strong sense of place prevails among villagers in the region of Hersonissos—though there may be a selection bias operating here: those with the strongest sense of place may be more likely to have remained in their village, while those with a weaker sense of place may be more likely to have left. Those who were born and lived all of their lives in one village strongly identified primarily—if not exclusively—with their Cretan village. Several older women, who had moved to their husband's village when they married, identified with the village where they currently lived and had spent most of their lives. Some who identified most strongly with their village also saw themselves as part of a larger geographic and social/cultural context, citing the village county as a second level of identification. Some additionally cited Crete, with or without mentioning the county. For example, the 15-year old girl in the village of Gonies said she is proud of being Cretan and plans to maintain long hair, local customs, and a heavy Cretan accent. In no instances did individuals identify solely with Greece, despite Crete's long history as part of modern Greece

(since 1912). Crete's history of occupation and resistance no doubt contributes to Cretans' legendary spirit of fierce independence.

This strong sense of identity associated with physical place has obvious psychological and emotional consequences on individuals and on the community, as a whole. Besides fostering a feeling of belonging and a sense of sharing a community, strong emotional attachment to place may prove painful for those who choose to remain in villages with a declining population and a deteriorating economic base. Several older villagers lamented that their villages are dying of outmigration in search of jobs, leaving behind only the elderly, who will eventually die. No children live in them any longer. This sentiment was particularly evident in Sfindili, a village located on the site of a proposed dam (Aposelemis Dam). The subject of the dam and the possible flooding of Sfindili, as a result, was a highly emotional prospect for village residents. An older man simply proclaimed: "I will die if I go." Several women cried openly about the prospect of losing their homes. Although residents of other villages in the region's interior are hopeful that the dam will provide water for much-needed irrigation, some are skeptical about the true motive behind the dam's construction. The water, they fear, is destined for tourists on the coast and the reservoir solely for recreational activities. The emotional strain is compounded by the uncertainty surrounding the project; that is, if and when it will occur. No alternative infrastructure has been planned for the village that will be flooded, exacerbating the already deteriorating economic conditions and prospects of the region. As one man argued, the government has abandoned them, instead of providing a motive for people to stay on in the villages, such as pensions for younger people or allowances for children. Sfindili once used to have a school with six teachers; sadly, no more children live in the village now.

Aside from mandatory vote, the villagers interviewed were not involved in politics—local or otherwise. Indeed, there did not appear to be any political organizations outside of the larger cities such as Heraklion. This low level of political

organization—by no means indicative of a low level of political awareness—may, to some extent, reflect Crete's long history of political occupation and the dangers associated with political opposition (a source of pride for Cretans), as well as the rural and largely inaccessible nature of most of the island. Feelings of political ineffectualness were rampant in the village of Sfindili, as described above. Yet, even the 'Director of Cultural Matters' in Avdou commented—with regard to the Aposelemis Dam project—that information is lacking and "decisions are generally made elsewhere." Thus, our impression was that residents of the interior villages feel somewhat isolated and removed from governmental decision-making. Among the regional mayor's plans was to improve communication throughout the region by initiating a regional newsletter and establishing computer links between villages and his office, as well as by making regular visits to the interior villages. Villagers in the hinterland must rely on village presidents for information about regional matters, whereas residents located close to the office in Hersonissos seemed to feel somewhat better able to express their opinions, for example at public meetings.

Although there was little political organization in the villages, many of the villagers were involved in community groups of one kind or another. Several men were long-time representatives on the church council. Villages close to the coast, however, had civic/commercial organizations in charge of addressing tourism-related activities. Members met to discuss how to provide better service to customers and how to improve the community, including addressing any illegal or otherwise problematic behavior. According to a restaurant manager in Piscopiano, this organization succeeded in mobilizing volunteer activity in the community, i.e. whitewashing house facades and generally upgrading public spaces. The cultural association of the village of Avdou was particularly impressive in this way. It was established in 1977, with the mission to preserve the history and cultural traditions of the village. The group organizes regular cultural events and activities, including a three-week festival,

highlighting traditional songs and dances, arts and crafts, and foods. Its director emphasized that the festival was for villagers, not for tourists. Aside from the festival, the cultural association tried to keep local customs alive throughout the year with holiday celebrations and other traditions. Special activities targets children's appreciation of their heritage, encouraging them to maintain Cretan customs. The group documents, preserves and disseminates oral histories, songs and stories. Funded through regional monies, fund-raising and bequests, it is also involved in preserving the architectural heritage of the village and in honoring important historical figures.

Changes brought about by development and tourism

Development of Crete's infrastructure preceded and undoubtedly contributed to the increase in tourism on the island. Local development initiatives and infrastructure grew hand in hand with tourism. Increased revenue from tourism, as well as monies from the European Union, pushed development even further. Those old enough to remember the changes that occurred in the 1960s and 1970s, followed by the rapid rise in tourism during the 1980s and 1990s, clearly welcomed such amenities as electricity, running water, improved sanitary conditions and employment generated by tourism. "Life used to be hard," mused one elderly man in Piscopiano. "It was the worst misery, and people died very unhappily." He related that he did not even own shoes, until he was drafted into the army and that his mother had to scrub and pound clothes by hand. "Even the wealthiest man could not buy what he needed," he said. The only employment available then was in farming and menial jobs. Although he was grateful for the improved standard of living that he and his family have been enjoying, he recognized that even today "there is never enough money because of the higher standards of living; before, people were satisfied with little." Similarly, the restaurant manager in Piscopiano lamented, "we didn't have stress in the past, or problems. Now it is all money, money, money!" The priest in Port

Hersonissos philosophized: "Material goods in general are destroying people, and, in these tendencies, lays the greatest danger—of losing one's culture, identity, language and religion."

Most interviewees recognized the link between tourism and improved job opportunities, and most expressed an appreciation for the consequent higher standard of living. Some also spoke of the expanded world view that accompanies tourism and the opportunities to meet people from other countries and even to establish long lasting friendships. "Tourists provide a way of seeing the world," according to the school principal in Port Hersonissos. The restaurant manager in Piscopiano, who had worked in the tourism industry for thirty years, said that his contact with tourism has changed his behavior and that of others. He believes that, as a result, locals treat each other more cordially, just as they have to treat tourists—a kind of spillover effect. In this way, "even the elderly behave better," he said, "and they tend to forget their own problems." Likewise, visiting Crete may leave a lasting effect on tourists. The priest in Port Hersonissos conveyed a local saying: "If you sit with a Greek, you will become Greek." In his view, relationships between Greeks and tourists are totally harmonious. He thinks that tourists generally admire the Greek culture and even envy the Greeks their religion, because it provides such strong guidance in life. He contends that followers of Greek Orthodoxy do not stray religiously or morally, despite exposure to other religions, and that social bonds here are very strong. While church attendance declines during the tourist season, as it also does during the olive harvesting season, people "always return to church when they are not occupied with other things."

Some individuals did refer to the negative influences of tourism, though most did so only when posed with a direct question about it. The greatest concerns by far focused on its effects on social life and Cretan culture. The restaurant manager in Piscopiano explained that, for example, "people see tourists come one year with one partner and the next year with a different

partner. Such behavior patterns have affected locals very much, causing a lot of harm on local norms and structures. Divorce, very rare in the past, is increasing, as a result, and altering the family structure of local communities. Week-long traditional Cretan weddings are disappearing, too. For good or ill, some marry tourists—typically, Greek men marry female tourists rather than the reverse—with obvious effects on family traditions and local culture.

A sizable portion of the tourists in Crete are young adults who fill the beaches, in the day time, and the bars and night clubs, at night. Thus Cretans who live in tourist areas are often exposed to drunkenness and rowdy behavior that can last until morning, as well as more overt sexuality than is traditional in Crete. Apparently, little criminal activity is associated with tourism, however, beyond occasional thefts and disorderly conduct. A grandmother in Koutoulafari expressed concern about these influences on her grandson. The caretaker of the cultural museum in Piscopiano (and father of the regional mayor) conveyed that “the bars are doing the best, but there is ugly behavior—fights even among women, throwing up and drunkenness”. A few respondents in the coastal area also cited problems of traffic congestion (particularly motor scooters) and noise, though not everyone seemed to be bothered by these things. Landscape transformation, as a result of tourism development—with the appearance, for example of water parks and golf courses—was viewed by some as negative change. Golf courses appeared to be part of a strategy to improve the “quality” of tourists in the region, that is, to attract wealthier tourists. Rather than more tourists and young tourists who seemed to be spending less and less, locals—including the regional mayor—would prefer tourists who are “well-behaved, dignified and not problem-causing, and who are serious and wealthy.”

While others also spoke of the deleterious effects of tourism on Cretan culture, a few noted that, ironically, tourism may simultaneously help preserve cultural elements. For example, authentic Cretan dancing took place in the square of Old

Hersonissos, every Monday evening, funded by village merchants and enjoyed by tourists, while the Lychnostatis museum, located on the outskirts of Hersonissos, educated tourists about Cretan culture and ways of life.

Tourism has not yet reached the interior villages of the region in any significant way. While some day tourists visit these villages, no overnight accommodations are available. The sentiment of most respondents is that increased revenues brought by tourism would be good, but not at the expense of destroying their villages. A ceramist in Gonies, who depends in large measure on tourist dollars, was concerned that “the coastal area is moving to the hinterlands”, blaming principally the investors. Her concerns seemed to lie less with the wealth of tourists, however, than with their impact on the environment and traditional culture and called for the development of eco-tourism and agro-tourism. “Tradition has been lost; it’s now just a show. We give sophisticated cultural recitals now. Only interior Crete remains traditional”. Not surprisingly, Avdou’s cultural director expressed similar trepidation about the potential impact of tourism on the village. She emphasized that she does not wish Avdou to become like Hersonissos, in terms of tourism. Such sentiments raise the questions of whether and to what extent tourism should be developed in the region’s interior villages. The potential economic benefits are clear, but the environmental, social and cultural costs may be severe.

Finally, mixed responses were received to the question of predicting the future of the region in the next ten years. Most were optimistic, projecting that the economy would continue to improve, leading to even greater employment and improved standards of living. One man pointed to Greece’s membership in the European Union as an asset for both the economy at large (i.e. through an increase in country’s exports), and tourism in particular (on the basis of the common currency, “Euro Dollars”). Several people predicated their positive responses on condition of peace in the broader periphery. Others, such as the ceramist in Gonies, feared an intensification of tourism

impacts upon the coast, leading to a growing flow of people, investment and construction to the hinterland, as the coast becomes intolerable. She admonished: “We need people with long-term vision. We destroyed the coast. Let us not destroy the (inner) country... Let’s not be servants to others; that’s what we are now, servants to tourists”.

Eight years later, today, those generally hopeful feelings of the residents about the future of their region and the quality of their lives are largely fulfilled. However, by now, processes that were well on their way at the time of this research survey have been entrenched and their outcomes only intensified in ways both positive and negative, at an ever-spreading geographical expanse of the area under study.

Continuity and change in Hersonissos: concluding thoughts

The aim of this article was to explore how the people of the region of Hersonissos have been negotiating their rapidly changing reality and sense of place, with the explosive growth of tourism—the main transformative force of the northern coast of the island of Crete during the past three or four decades. It aimed to catch a snapshot of a Mediterranean tourist region in transition. An effort was made to explore tensions over local uses and meanings of space and place; over the creation, dissolution and metamorphosis of local space and place identity; and over the interweaving of place and landscape scales, boundaries, and characteristics. Meanings and impacts of tourism on destinations and their vicinity are obviously produced, filtered and reproduced through diverse local and non-local social, cultural, economic and political structures and processes. Feelings and attitudes towards tourism and development, as well as implications of change for local life, as expressed by the inhabitants of the selected towns and villages in the area under study, varied enormously. Distinctive patterns, however, seem to emerge, even through such an elementary and exploratory analysis, as this study represents.

As a rule, in cases where whole communities and/or individuals depend economically on short-term tourism revenues and benefits for their livelihood, the prevalent local attitude towards development and tourism is unequivocally positive. We found that, in the region of Hersonissos, development and tourism have generated opportunities and infrastructure and dramatically improved standards of living for most. Nevertheless, most Cretans continue to hold onto and identify with traditional ways of life, roles and values, and to feel strong ties to their village home, even when living elsewhere. Generally speaking, cultural and social roles, structures and values in the communities under study seem to be more resistant to change. Changes, here, seem to unfold in mostly non-disruptive, positive ways (i.e. local-tourist intermarriages) or in ways that bring about much-lacking empowerment and equality for the previously under-privileged (women, youth, etc.). On the other hand, economic and lifestyle practices seem to be susceptible to a transformation in favor of an urban, Western culture, with all positive and negative ramifications on local ways of life and economy, the urban and the rural landscape, infrastructure and transportation, demographics, food and dress and self/ cultural identity. These changes roughly attenuate with distance from the coast, acquiring distinctive geographical patterns that follow those of spatial tourist concentration, scale of development and incorporation into Cretan society and space (Terkenli 2001).

Despite this marked transformation, Cretans of the Hersonissos region not only display and express a remarkable sense of place-tied identity—typically to their village of birth or to the community where they resided most of their lives. This sense of place identity seems to have been fortified by forces of development and the presence of tourism in their midst. Indeed, local sense of identity seems to be emerging as the primary regulatory parameter guiding the direction and dynamic of growth, change and preservation in the minds and lives of the locals, in conjunction with another, major determining parameter, the short-term goal of local revenue maximization through tourism

(The Sustainable Development Group Report 2000). Sustainable planning and management of these two parameters—place identity and economic inflow—largely appear to guide future continuity and transformation in local economic, social, cultural and political structures and processes. Whether preservation of place identity and economic growth will continue to coexist as compatible and sustainable objectives for local life and development, in this newly emerging tourism-based cultural economy of space, remains to be seen. Beyond theoretical constructs, actual world circumstances invariably prove to incorporate much complexity, in terms of geographical and historical differentiation and socio-culturally contingency.

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