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**Historical Dynamics and Environmental Changes:  
The Case of Three Villages in North-west Highland Greece**

The study of a landscape is also the study as it is lived and experienced, and the place is the experience of it – with its paths and passages, its squares and mills, its fields, its threshing floors and pastures, its houses with their ovens and the memories all of these carry. The people who mark the landscape give it logical coherence and attribute content to it.<sup>1</sup> In keeping with this perspective, we will focus on the life histories of inhabitants from three villages in the Gramos mountain range in NW Greece. Our research examined the historically-produced social relations and practices that are inlaid in collective and individual time, in an attempt to understand the dynamics of the landscape. Through the locals' memories emerges the representation of local populations that are constantly interacting with the environment, simultaneously and indiscriminately 'intervening' and 'adapting' to it and organizing their lives in accordance with the environment. In short, they are perpetually in motion, as they are shaped by and formed through a metonymic causality relationship they entertain with the landscape. Rural communities and their places are not stable, relatively isolated entities outside of time and history struggling to survive within a hostile natural environment. Rather, they are societies characterised by change: technological developments, differentiations, and divisions along economic, class and cultural lines, and influenced by wider political and social dynamics. Communities respond to these changes by simultaneously modifying their places, in which natural and human environments are not distinguishable.

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<sup>1</sup> Alki Kyriakidou-Nestoros, *Λαογραφικά Μελετήματα* (Folklore Studies) (Athens: Nea Synora, 1988), 14-40.

ble, they are two sides of the same coin. This is point that will be emphasised by the theoretical contribution of this paper. This contribution is consistent with other anthropological studies of highland communities in Greece,<sup>2</sup> and it is a contribution not limited by barrier of the nature-culture division which dominated the academic discourse and especially social and cultural anthropology for a long time, as influenced by the work of F. Boas and C. Levi Strauss.<sup>3</sup> It is worth pointing out that the representation of rural communities in anthropological studies, influenced by structural functionalism until the 1960s and in folklore until the 1980s, insisted on the logic of the self-sufficiency of ‘isolated communities’ and their immediate dependence on their natural environment. Such concepts essentialised both rural communities and their surroundings.<sup>4</sup> In contrast to this approach, this paper is based on a

<sup>2</sup> For example, see Stathis Damianakos–Ersi Zakopoulou–Haralampos Kasimis–Vassilis Nitsiakos, *Εξουσία, εργασία και μνήμη σε τρία χωριά της Ηπείρου* (Power, Labor and Memory in three Villages of Epirus), Athens: Plethron, 1997. Nitsiakos offers a similar perspective: Vassilis Nitsiakos, *Οι ορεινές κοινότητες της Β. Πίνδου* (The Highland Communities of the Northern Pindus Range), Athens: Plethron, 1995; the same, “Παραδοσιακές πρακτικές διαχείρισης του ορεινού χώρου” (Traditional Practices of Highland Areas Management), in *Ερημοποίηση* (Desertification), edited by Nikos Beopoulos and Apostolos Papadopoulos (Athens: Gutenberg, 2008), 133-50; the same, *Peclari: Social Economy in a Greek Village* (Berlin: Lit-Verlag, 2016). See also Sarah Green, *Notes from the Balkans* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Andromachi Oikonomou, *Φύση, τεχνολογία και κοινωνία στις ορεινές κοινότητες του Κιθαιρώνα* (Nature, Technology and Society in Highland Communities at Kithaironas) (Athens: Odysseas, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Discussing this issue exceeds the priorities of this paper. For a summary of the relevant critique see Raymond Hames, “The Ecologically Noble Savage Debate,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 36 (2007): 177-90. Most important is the work of Philippe Descola, *Beyond Nature and Culture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013).

<sup>4</sup> For a comprehensive critique of Greek folklorists’ approaches to community studies see Vassilis Dalkavoukis, “Μνήμη και κοινότητα. Επαναπροσδιορίζοντας τις έννοιες στην προοπτική της σύγχρονης Λαογραφίας” (Memory and Community. Redefining the Notions in the Perspective of Contemporary Folklore Studies), in *Ελληνική Λαογραφία* (Greek Folklore), edited by Manolis Varvounis and Manolis Sergis (Athens: Herodotus, 2012b), 275-93; Nitsiakos; *Οι ορεινές κοινότητες*; the same, *Peclari*. The emphasis on community studies among British anthropologists dates back to the interwar period and is related to ethnographic studies in Africa. Following WWII, the work of Robert Redfield, *The Little Community* (Upsala and Stockholm: Upsala Uni-

number of theoretical assumptions assembled in the work of P. Descola.<sup>5</sup>

This paper is based on work conducted as part of a wider research project<sup>6</sup> which studied the landscape not as a static image, but through the dynamics of its changes. It is an interdisciplinary research on the environmental and social history of the landscape in the southern Gramos mountain range. After examining many highland areas in Northern Greece (Northern Pindos, Prespes, Rhodope, Pieria, Vitsi, etc.) the project team chose the area of the southern Gramos, in the upper basin of

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versity Publication, 1955) provided a theoretical framework for a global use of the concept of ‘community’ as a research and analytical tool. The critique of this paradigm was many-sided, and focused on the false argument of rural communities’ self-sufficiency, see for example Margaret Stacey’s work “The Myth of Community Studies,” in *The Sociology of Community*, ed. C. Bell and H. Newby (London: Frank Cass and Co, 1974), 13-26, the deconstruction of the concept of cultural isolation, see for example Ardener Edwin’s work “Remote Areas: some theoretical considerations,” in *Anthropology at Home*, ed. A. Jackson (London: Tavistock Publications, 1987), 38-54, and the emphasis on symbolic construction rather than territoriality, see for example, Anthony P. Cohen’s work *The Symbolic Construction of the Community* (London: Routledge, 1985). For a concise critique see Gisli Pálsson, “Human-environmental Relations: Orientalism, Paternalism and Communalism,” in *Nature and Society*, eds. Philippe Descola and Gisli Pálsson (London: Routledge, 1996), 63-82. During the interwar period in Greece, attempts were made to formulate a native theoretical approach for the study of rural societies based on the notion of community. Konstantinos Karavidas was the most prominent scholar leading this attempt. The political and social context from the mid-1930s onwards prohibited any further development of these attempts, see Maria Komninou–Efthimios Papataxiarchis, eds., *Κοινότητα, κοινωνία και ιδεολογία* (Community, Society and Ideology) (Athens: Papazisis, 1990).

<sup>5</sup> Descola, *Beyond Nature*.

<sup>6</sup> In the framework of the Action ‘Research–Create–Innovate’ (EPANEK–NSRF), a partnership of institutions and companies including the National Centre for Research and Technological Development, three laboratories from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Laboratory of Folklore and Social Anthropology, Laboratory of Forest Botany–Geobotany, Laboratory of Atmospheric Physics) and the companies SYSTADA and VERUS+, undertook the creation of an innovative 4D application for a tour through the history of the landscape. Through the application, users can travel through time, facing the same landscape at different moments in the past, but also testing alternative scenarios for its course in time or projection into the future. The app is available on-site to visitors to the area (via their mobile devices) and online. The project was titled ‘Eco-TimeMachine: a 4D tour in landscape history.’

the river Sarantaporos, focusing on the valley of Palea Kotyli.<sup>7</sup> This area, in addition to the ruined settlement of Old Kotyli, includes three other villages, Nea Kotyli, Pefkofyto and Chrysi, together with the zone of crops, meadows and other natural and man-made habitats surrounding it. It is an area in the mountainous area that separates Macedonia from Epirus, an area that has long been far from urban centres and outside the main roads and paths linking west and east in the southern Balkans.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, intense historical, social, and environmental changes have taken place in this area. We do not distinguish between the former and the latter because we consider environmental changes to be an integral part of the historical and social context and we recognise the environmental footprint produced by historical and social changes. Our study of the cultural construction of the landscape was implemented using qualitative research methods: ethnographic participant observation, open qualitative in-depth interviews, life histories. The ethnographic research in the area was carried out in the period October 2018 to January 2020. We collected material focusing on the contemporary landscape as a stimulus which could serve as the background of people's narratives.<sup>8</sup> The emphasis on the environmental factor inherent in the wider research project led us to prioritise exploration of issues

<sup>7</sup> The criteria for the selection of this area are explained at <https://ecotimemachine.gr/>. Palea Kotyli literally means 'old Kotyli.'

<sup>8</sup> There are no published studies focusing on those three villages. The only available brief studies are the work of Andreas Stefopoulos on the village of Chrysi, see Andreas Stefopoulos, "Παιδικά παραδοσιακά παιχνίδια από τη Χρυσή Καστοριάς" (Childrens' Traditional Games at Chrysi Kastorias), *Μακεδονικά* 12 (1972): 361-423. Also, the same, *Τροφές της Χρυσής Καστοριάς* (Foods from Chrysi Kastorias) (Ioannina: University of Ioannina–Publications of the Folklife Museum, 1981). Stefopoulos served as an elementary school teacher in Chrysi in the 1970s. There are relevant studies for nearby villages (Eptachori, Zouzouli, Pefkos, Grammochoria), from which we can draw conclusions for the area under consideration. See Kostas Manos, *Λαογραφικά Επταχωρίου–Βοΐου* (Folklore from Eptachori–Voion) (Athens, 1962); Michalis Raptis, *Τα μαρτυρικά Γραμμοχώρια της Καστοριάς* (The Long-suffering Villages of Gramos at Kastoria) (Athens: Karagkounis, 1997); Angelos Sinanis, *Ο Γράμμος και τα Μαστοροχώρια της Κόνιτσας* (Gramos and the Craftsmen Villages) (Athens: Abnavasi, 2010); Dimitris Tsingalos, "Τα παλιοχώρια του Επταχωρίου" (The old villages of Eptachori), in *Annales of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Conference of Voiaki Estia* (Thessaloniki: Voiaki Estia, 1979), 77-86.

relating to house and settlement construction, crops, farming, animal husbandry, relationship with the forest, food, the organisation of work and daily life and forms of ownership. However, as is the case in the context of any ethnography, the locals led our discussions on topics they considered most important. We have no doubt that the material we gathered constitutes a presentation of life elaborated by collective and individual memory; one that responds to the questions: ‘what was there then’ and what are the needs of the present and future in terms of ‘what was there then.’

### *The Area in the 19<sup>th</sup> and up to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century*

References are limited regarding settlements in this valley during the Byzantine and Ottoman periods. Such references provide descriptions of small villages and service stations (hospitals, monasteries) for those crossing the Gramos mountain range. For centuries the nearest towns and cities in the area were Nestorio (SE), Konitsa (W) and Kastoria (SE). Oral collective memory presents data going back to the beginning of the 19th century. The first information about the existence of these three villages is found in the memoirs of travellers in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>9</sup> Locals acknowledge the creation of their villages at about the

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<sup>9</sup> Kotyli (referred by its Slavic placename, Koteltsi) is mentioned as a village of 150 Christian inhabitants with a church and ‘miserable inn’ in 1886. There are reports explaining that in 1905 or 1910 the village population was about 200 inhabitants and a boys-school with 30 pupils was operating. Chrysi (Sllatina – a Vlach placename referring to the existence of a swamp or stagnant water) during this period had about 500 Christian inhabitants, a church and an inn. It is said that Chrysi was established around 1700 by cattle breeders from Epirus. In 1886, Pefkofyto (Visanskon or Vysanskon) had 170 Christian inhabitants. A school, affiliated to the Ecumenical Patriarchate, existed in the village in 1905. Information is provided by D.M. Brancoff, *La Macédoine et sa population chrétienne avec deux cartes ethnographiques* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1905), 182-3. See also Nikolaos Schinas, *Οδοιπορική σημειώσεις Μακεδονίας, Ηπείρου, νέας οροθετικής γραμμής και Θεσσαλίας* (Travel Notes from Macedonia, Epirus and along the New Frontier Line and Thessaly) (Athens: Messenger d’Athènes, 1886), 224, 816. Also, see Eleftheria Traiou, *Τα μονοπάτια του Γράμου* (The Trails of Gramos) (Kastoria: Municipality of Kastoria, n.d.), 43-4. It is worth mentioning that the data provided for this region in population censuses of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century are rather questionable, often influenced by the national priorities of those who conducted the censuses. However, there is no doubt that the

same period. According to accounts of our informants, Kotyli was gradually constructed between 1820 and 1870 based on pre-existing uninhabited ruins. The village settlement was divided by a small river. On its NW riverbank there was the neighbourhood of Greek-speaking families from southern Aitoloakarnania. On the SE riverbank some Albanian-speaking extended families created their own neighbourhood. They originated from the Epirus region of NW Greece and migrated to Gramos after the destruction of Souli by Ottoman military forces in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Locals refer to them as Arvanites, a term widely used in Greece to connote the Albanian speaking populations of Greek national identity since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As one villager mentioned ‘Others came from Albania, others came from here, from the area beyond, from Hasia...’ (Gregory Evangellou, 89-year-old). What is certain, however, is that the populations of all three villages (Kotyli, Pefkofyto, Chrysi) have at some point moved from various places further west of the northern Pindos mountain range. The words of Yannis Thomas, who was born in 1940 in the old village of Kotyli, are revealing. ‘Some came from Epirus, others from Northern Epirus, others, as we say, from the Vio region [...] They were hunted by the Turks from the Peloponnese, from old Greece, people came here to hide, that’s why they are called “Kachaounides,” hunted. This place was deserted prior to their arrival... it was the forest and the mountains.’

The gradual population growth in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as well as the broader socio-political and environmental conditions<sup>10</sup> lead to overseas migration to the USA and Canada. The remittances and the donations from the migrants improved the village infrastructure. The church of Kotyli was built in 1916 with donations provided by immigrants.

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inhabitants of the region were not involved in the events of 1903-08 Ilinden uprising. This means that they were forming their communities within the Greek national project, see Dimitris Lithoxou, “Τα χωριά της Καστοριάς” (The Villages of Kastoria), <https://www.lithoksou.net/search/label/Μακεδονία.%20Τα%20χωριά%20της%20Καστοριάς> (accessed April 24, 2023).

<sup>10</sup> The degradation of the soil due to overgrazing affected the ability of the fields to provide better harvest.

There are no oral testimonies, written sources, or studies<sup>11</sup> mentioning the settlement of refugees in the area after the compulsory population exchange between Greece and Turkey in 1922. During the 1920s a few families of native Muslims from the neighbouring village of Myrovliti migrated to Albania. Most of the Albanian-speaking Muslim families of Myrovliti were exempted from the 1922 exchange by being categorised as Chams.<sup>12</sup> During the same period, the villages in the area were renamed and given their current names<sup>13</sup> and administrative changes took place. Kotyli, which in the 1928 census is presented as having a police station, a community office and a primary school, formed the *Community of Kotyli* along with Glykoneri (formerly Dr[i]anovo), and Myrovliti (1928).<sup>14</sup> Pefkofyto and Chrysi, where there was also a post office and a primary school according to the 1928 census, formed the *Community of Chrysi*.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, in 1927, the sub-prefecture of Kastoria was upgraded and became the province of Kastoria.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>11</sup> It is worth mentioning that Efstathios Pelagidis, in his study on the settlement of the 1922 refugees in western Greek Macedonia, makes no reference to the area: Efstathios Pelagidis, *Η αποκατάσταση των προσφύγων στη δυτική Μακεδονία 1923-1930* (The Settlement of Refugees in Western Macedonia 1923-1930) (Thessaloniki: Kyriakidis, 1994).

<sup>12</sup> On the history of Chams in NW Greece see Lambros Baltsiotis, “The Muslim Chams of Northwestern Greece: The Grounds for the Expulsion of a ‘Non-existent’ Minority Community,” *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 12 (November 2011): 1-31; Eleftheria Manta, “The Chams of Albania and the Greek State (1923-1945),” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 4, no. 29 (2009): 523-35. Laurie Kain Hart, “Culture, Civilization, and Demarcation at the Northwest Borders of Greece,” *American Ethnologist* 26 (1999): 196-220, and Green, *Notes from the Balkans*, offer useful ethnographic insides on the present-day status of native Albanian-speaking and/or bilingual Albanian and Greek rural communities in NW Greece.

<sup>13</sup> Slatina was renamed Chrysi [Government Gazette 413/22.11.1926], Koteltsi became the community of Kotyli [Government Gazette 206/28.9.1927], Visansko was renamed Pefkofytos [Government Gazette 156/8.8.1928].

<sup>14</sup> Kimon Digenis, “Κοτύλη” (Kotyli), *Μεγάλη Ελληνική Εγκυκλοπαίδεια*, vol. 15 (Athens: Pirsos, 1934): 18.

<sup>15</sup> Theofylaktos Papakonstantinou, “Καστοριά” (Kastoria), *Μεγάλη Ελληνική Εγκυκλοπαίδεια*, vol. 14 (Athens: Pirsos, 1934): 17.

<sup>16</sup> Thomi Verrou, *Τοπωνύμια και διοικητική κατανομή οικισμών της Μακεδονίας: Μεταβολές στον 20ό αι.* (Placenames and Administrative Settlement Distribution in Mac-

Despite these developments, the modes of agricultural production, the trade networks and the infrastructure in the region does not present major changes from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and until WWII. Local communities were mainly endogamous with limited social relations and marriage exchanges between neighbouring villages. Paparizos mentions that villagers from one village use to go to the folk celebrations of nearby villages. Support between villages were also evident. According to the same author, during the Balkan Wars a delegation from Pefkos went to Kotyli in 1912 and asked for support to their cause.<sup>17</sup> Support was also secured through the local patronage networks established with Nestorio and Kastoria rather than with Konitsa. The results of national and local elections in these villages throughout the interwar indicates the stability of power structures and patronage networks established by Greek nationalists in the area during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. These networks became the basis for the support of royalist and conservative local MPs.

The place, as defined by our informants, included the built environment of the settlements, the facilities located outside the villages (water mills, threshing floors, paths and roads, beehives, chapels, sheepfolds, orchards, nearby gardens), the fields, the forest, and special places with a symbolic dimension (the river trough where X drowned..., the ‘tall tree,’ the monk’s passage, etc.). Human presence was organised and framed differently in these zones. It should be pointed out that the forest was not conceived of as an undisturbed wild landscape, but contained places where man, flora and fauna coexisted (forest slopes providing wood, places to hunt, places to avoid, grazing meadows, hillsides where mushrooms were gathered, trees that bore fruit, etc.).

Families were engaged in agricultural production and logging. They also had livestock. The reported practice of the custom of *Perperouna* in the villages of Kotyli and Pefkos, a religious rain ceremony, indicates that irrigation systems were not developed and during the summer months drought was often a problem. Paparizos reports that sometimes

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edonia: Changes in the 20<sup>th</sup> century) (Thessaloniki: University Studio Press, 2008), 182.

<sup>17</sup> Giannis Paparizos, *Ta χωριά του Γράμμου* (The villages of Gramos) (Thessaloniki: Kodikas, 1998).

drought periods lasted for more than sixty days. The consequences were the adverse growth of crops, dried out springs and streams, dry grass.<sup>18</sup> Reforestation and redefining the field divisions in 1928 was also reported in our discussions. These processes started immediately after the region was incorporated into the Greek state. The main crops included beans, leeks, potatoes, onions, cabbage, and wheat for food needs as well as grits, corn, barley, 'tai' (*Avena*) and 'rovi' (*Vicia ervilia*) to provide fodder. The fruit trees existed in the area were walnut, pear, coral, plum, apple, a few cherry and a few quince trees. The fields near the villages were more fertile because they were regularly fertilised by animal dung. The more distant and mountainous fields were used for cereal production. Near the villages there were also areas with cultivated terraces. The fields were subject to crop rotation every year and rarely to fallow. Each family household had, in average, 15 to 20 acres of land. Most of them were barren, due to the cold environment, lack of water and fertilisers, as well as soil exhaustion. An aerial photograph taken in 1945 presents 563 ha of crops in this area. Assuming that a significant part of these were already abandoned or fallow, the remaining area corresponds with the estimated number of family households holding each one 15 to 20 acres of land. The class structure of these villages was composed by few families with large landholdings. The limited total arable land was not sufficient to significantly diversify the socio-economic background. Any class differentiation seems to have resulted from a combination of several factors: income from livestock farming, logging, migrant remittances.

Cultivation was accomplished by using the labour force of all the family household members. The average family could cover the cultivation of 7 to 15 acres. In times of intensive work, families of the same clan cooperated in providing additional labour force. Gender differentiation was applied in a number of activities regarding the care of children, domestic work, the care of animals and hunting. The 89-year-old Grigoris Evangelou recalls: 'the best fields were around the village... But the manure was not enough, there was always need for more. Villagers used to settle the sheep in some fields for a number of days. This offered some manure... There were no other fertilizers back then. We

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<sup>18</sup> Papparizos, *op.cit.*, 59-62.

never cultivate the same crop in the same field. Year by year we changed the crop in each field... one year corn, one year wheat. In some cases we applied fallow.’ Mainly because of the location of the fields, wild animals often entered the fields in search of food, so people placed scarecrows or other deterrents. Alexandra Gounti and Panayiotis Efthymiou from old Kotyli recall: ‘Bears often “visited” our fields. Villagers lit the lanterns with oil and put a dog to bark. They'd throw in a little petrol in the field, the smell prevented some animals from coming. Sometimes people would go and stand guard to keep wild animals out.’

Livestock farming offered, apart from meat, the ability to have dairy products such as milk, cheese and yoghurt. They were mainly used for home-consumption. There was rarely enough for sale. Every family had livestock, but the number varied depending on the economic situation and the number of family members. Apart from one or two ‘pairs of oxen,’ each household had an average between 100 and 300 sheep and goats in the 1930s and 1940s. Given that the estimated number of households during the interwar in the area was about 150, the total number of sheep and goats is consistent with the records of the rural Management Studies conducted by the prefecture. Just before WWI, 20,000 goats and sheep belonging to the villagers were present in the area. In addition, until 1946, the area hosted every year the herds of semi-nomad Vlachs and Sarakatsan nomads. They rented mountainous areas, such as the ‘Arenes,’ from late April to late October every year. Trade relations were common between them and the locals: ‘when the Vlachs were coming, we were filling our baskets with fruits and sold them to Vlachs. In exchange we receive wool.’ With such a large animal population, it seems that grazing was the decisive factor in shaping the vegetation and the overall environment of the area. In addition to the extensive grassland (about 17.5 % of the area in 1945), forests played an important role in the diet of these animals, through the practice of branching, i.e., collecting branches, mainly oak, to feed the stabled animals during the winter. As a result, the oak forests in the area were generally sparse and with small trees. The first Forest Management Studies vividly describe the “disaster” that these practices entailed.

In addition to the above activities, some villagers were involved in beekeeping. Young men from Kotyli and Chrysi were also working as craftsmen. As it happened in other mountainous Balkan communities,

these men organised themselves in ‘bouloukia,’ collectivities with ‘bricklayers, charcoal makers, tailors, goldsmiths, potters, conductors, furnace makers, baxevantes (gardeners), painters’ travelling around northern Greece in search of work until the 1940s.<sup>19</sup>

The forest was a source of both revenue and risk. The risks relate to attacks by wild animals on domestic animals, crops, herds, and people. The main wild animals mentioned are bears, wolves, foxes, partridges, wild boars, hares, deer, elk, and skunks. All of our informants report that these attacks were part of a larger mode of symbiosis between wild-life and humans. In addition to the techniques of protecting the crops mentioned above, the protection of flocks was based on human presence, by building strong wooden fences in the pens and by building walls around the houses. As a source of income, the forest offered hunting and logging opportunities. Hunting provided food and furs, the latter of which was among the main commodities traded by the inhabitants of Nestorio, alongside dairy and logging products.

Pre-WWII logging differs significantly from post-WWII logging. Until WWII logging was carried out by families for their daily needs. There was limited systematic logging aiming to the market, traders coming from Kastoria. Due to the limited road network, logging was mainly carried out in the most accessible places near the villages, where it sometimes took the form of deforestation. Higher up, at the slopes of the ‘Arenas’ the public forest was managed as a property by various local Cham families from Myrovliti. They leased it to Greek merchants who used water mills to process the wood.

Market relations were not exclusively related to logging. The villagers of Pefkofyto and Chrysi visited the open market (bazaar) of Epitachorio, which ‘may not have had the wealth of Nestorio but was closer in distance.’ The villagers of Kotyli bought the necessary things from the open market of Nestorio every Saturday: ‘on foot and with an animal, on the path, it took about 4-5 hours walking.’ Everyday needs were

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<sup>19</sup> Nora Skouteri-Didaskalou, “Από τας κύκλωθεν πολιτείας και χώρας του Άνω και Μέσου Αλιάκμονος: Ο χώρος οι οικισμοί και οι άνθρωποι στο γύρισμα του 20ου αιώνα. Ένα πρόβλημα ανθρωπολογικής προσέγγισης” (From the nearby cities and countries of the Upper and Middle Aliakmon: The place, the settlements and the people at the turn of the 20th century. A problem of anthropological approach) (PhD diss., Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 2008), 537.

also covered by the grocers who were regularly coming to the villages. The locals bought oil, wheat, wine and ouzo, tobacco, flour and fish, coal tar, fodder, rarely clothing. They sometimes used money payments but barter was also a common practice: ‘whatever anyone had... wood, goat and sheep skins, livestock. Back then, it was difficult to buy... Anyone who had sheep had jackets’ (testimony of Alexandra Goundi, 82-year-old).

A network of paths, narrow streets and alleys was used for communication between villages and the nearby agro-towns of Nestorio, Kastoria and Konista. The wider path, constructed in the 1930s, follows the current route between the three villages and ends at Nestorio. Parts of this path were available, under certain conditions, be used by lorries in the late 1930s. The oldest path between Kotyli and Nestorio, called ‘Charos’ (death), was shorter in distance but rather rough and dangerous during the winter months. Nikos Antoniou (85-year-old) from Pefkofyto recounts: ‘we lost mules and people. Every year we used to fix it with shovels. It was scary to pass the mule. [...] We suffered.’ These paths gradually disappeared, especially when paved roads were built in the 1970s. Today they are almost invisible, as they have been covered by the woods.

Population growth reached its peak just before WWII. Until the 1940s, a period mentioned by all informants as the heyday of their communities, the population grew gradually. Oral memory accounts refer to 70-80 houses in Kotyli and Chrysi (with 6-10 people in each house) and 50 houses in Pefkofyto in the 1930s-40s.<sup>20</sup> Other villagers had smaller populations.

### *Changes in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century*

The prosperity of the region ended in the 1940s. This area was not a battlefield during the 1940-41 war in Greece. The picture changed, however, after 1943, when the area became the main refuge for guerrilla groups and the main theatre of the Greek Civil War from 1946 to 1949.

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<sup>20</sup> The population growth is confirmed by official state censuses. In the 1928 census Kotyli had 364 inhabitants, Pefkofyto 231 and Chrysi 383. In the 1940 census the number of inhabitants increased.

Undeniably, the villages of the area and the environment suffered various consequences of the Civil War.<sup>21</sup> One of the events which inaugurated the Civil War was the execution of the Kotyli National Army Gendarmerie detachment by leftist forces.<sup>22</sup> The superiority of the leftist Democratic Army (DSE) forces in the area caused reprisals by the National Army. A memo of the DSE states that after the Varkiza Agreement and specifically in the period between the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of November 1946 a number of violent incidents took place at Kotyli. The National Army Gendarmerie executed a leftist villager named Thanasis Goutis. The Gendarmerie imprisoned and tortured other villagers (Th. Elias, G. Stergios, P. Antoniou, A. Kosmas, N. Nikolaou, H.G. Goutis and Ch. Stergiou). There was also looting of the households of left-wing residents, namely those of the local priest I. Papadopoulos and other villagers such as N. Nikolaou, Th. Stergios ('15 sheep'), G. Stergios ('500 ounces of wheat'), E. Theodorou ('20 ounces of butter'). The village was forced to provide to the Gendarmerie '3,000 ounces of bread' (i.e., 84 kilos).<sup>23</sup> It should be noted that with the exemption of R. Alvanos' monograph, studies related to the events of the Civil War in these areas mainly focus on the military events.<sup>24</sup> Therefore little evidence and information is available on the environment of the region.

The most important development during the Civil War was the compulsory evacuation of the villages imposed by the National Army in

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<sup>21</sup> Many of our informants referred to these consequences. Their accounts are confirmed by archival material. A report produced by the Democratic Army in 11-11-1946 outlines the activities of its forces in Kotyli and Pefkofyto, see Democratic Army of Greece [hereafter DSE] "Εκθεση Δράσης 7-7-1946 έως 6-11-1946, DSE/ODEK/Gramos Archive, 11 Νοε 1946". The National Army had also closely monitored the local developments. A number of reports and other relevant documents are available in numerous files at the Archives of the Army History Directorate, Hellenic General Army Staff (see 22/E/681/Δ/29, 4/Δ/1540/108-109, 4/Δ/1540/79, 5/1292/57, 22/E/668/13, 1/A/1037/1, 5/1277/36).

<sup>22</sup> DSE, *ibid.* See also Periklis Rodakis–Mpampis Grammenos, *Έτσι άρχισε ο εμφύλιος–Ολόκληρη η έκθεση του Δημοκρατικού Στρατού στον ΟΗΕ τον Μάρτιο του 1947* (That is how the Civil War Started) (Athens: Glaros, 1987).

<sup>23</sup> Rodakis–Grammenos, *op.cit.*

<sup>24</sup> Raymondos Alvanos, "Κοινωνικές συγκρούσεις και πολιτικές συμπεριφορές στην περιοχή της Καστοριάς 1922-1949" (Social clashes and political standpoints in the region of Kastoria 1922-1949) (PhD diss., Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 2005).

May 1947. Families were transferred to Kastoria, Nestorio and other nearby to Kastoria villages (such as Kolokyntou, Mesopotamia and Maniaki).<sup>25</sup> The whole process was part of Operation Terminus implemented during the Civil War to deprive the Democratic Army of material and human resources provided by the rural communities.<sup>26</sup> The priest of Chrysi recalls that ‘they took us there, to the church mill we used to call it, and from there they took us to Kotyli. And there were the military jeeps waiting for us... and they loaded us and took us to Dispilio, Argos and Kastoria. There were some elderly women, like my mother, who had never seen a car before that day... They took straw to feed the jeeps, they thought they were eat straw.’ Another villager from Kotyli remembers: ‘the National Army attacked, they were chasing the partisans, the villages were liberated, they told us “follow us” and we followed the army and then they took us down to Kastoria, Nestorio, Mesopotamia, Argos Orestiko. They gave an order and in three days the village was emptied. Each one of us took two or three animals and whatever else was possible to carry.’

The village of Kotyli was bombed by the Democratic Army artillery and the National Army Airforce without suffering significant damage. Ioannis Thomas remembers about his village before it was evacuated: ‘in ’47 the planes came and bombed the village. Kotyli was guerrilla-occupied. Nothing could pass through there. The entire village was blocked, guerrillas and so on [...]. A certain Captain Giannoulis had his headquarters there.’<sup>27</sup> Daily life was affected by these bombings and the military operations. Even today, in the forest one can still find bullets in the tree trunks. For many years people digging in the earth accidentally found landmines. In the 1950s and the 1960s some villagers were injured or killed by landmines. Moreover, when the people evac-

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<sup>25</sup> These movements are also mentioned in Alvanos, *op.cit.* and Paparizos, *Τα χωριά του Γράμμου*.

<sup>26</sup> For a comprehensive analysis on the Terminus operation, see Elias Nikolakopoulos–Alkis Rigos–Giannis Psallidas, *Ο Εμφύλιος Πόλεμος. Από τη Βάρκιζα στο Γράμμο* (The Civil War. From Varkiza to Gramos) (Athens: Themelio, 2002).

<sup>27</sup> George Giannoulis (1915-1948) was a native of Eptachori, a village located northwest of Kotyli. He was an emblematic political and military personality of western Macedonia during WWII and the Civil War. See Dimitris Tsitas, *Φάκελος Γιαννούλη και άλλα τινά* (The Giannoulis’ Files) (Athens: Anoixi, 1992).

uated their villages, they left not only their homes but also the land uncultivated. Bushes and hornbeams covered the paths, fields were filled with weeds and forest animals destroyed the remaining crops, leaving behind a wild landscape. Some left-wing families secretly remained in the villages in 1947-48 or attempted to move cattle to graze close to the villages. But this was not enough to prevent the land from becoming desolate.

After the end of WWII, in 1951, the villagers of Chrysi and Pefkofyto returned to their villages. The children from Chrysi, who had been transferred to children's safe houses, returned in 1953-54. However, in the case of Kotyli things went differently; some residents returned in 1950-51 and found their houses damaged. These were mainly families of shepherds who intended to re-establish their herds. After a referendum among the villagers and with the encouragement of the local authorities, the villagers decided not to return to Kotyli but to establish a new settlement in the area of today's Nea Kotyli. The 89-year-old Gregoris Evangelou, who was 17 years old at the time, has vivid memories: 'half of them didn't want to return to the old village... They didn't want to! They said we should stay here at the lowlands, make a new home here...' 'A committee was established by the villagers of Kotyli. From Kastoria they were chasing us away, how will it be? Some said we should go to Prespes lake region where there were several abandoned villages, most of them supported the idea of constructing a new village at a place called Gkurousia,' says Yannis Thomas. His first cousin, Georgios Evangellou, elaborated the events: 'those who wanted to go back [to old Kotyli], they did it. They got with them their sheep and goats. My family, for example, wanted to return there [i.e., to old Kotyli] because we had our shepherds' huts up there... About 30 families felt more comfortable to live at the place of the new village. After 1955 we all left the old village...'

Local authorities encouraged the villagers of Kotyli to abandon 'the old village.' Given the post-Civil War political context, the fear that the DA army might return was widespread. Highland villages were perceived as potential supply hubs for leftist guerrillas.<sup>28</sup> In addition, the new village was located close to the fields they cultivated and water

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<sup>28</sup> In this respect see Nikolakopoulos et al., *op.cit.*

sources, but especially closer to the main road to Nestorio and Kastoria. The final decision to establish the new village was supported by the state's granting of a sum of 700 drachmas per family and animals (5-7 goats, 2 mules and 2 cows) to start their life in the new village. Those who were systematically engaged in animal husbandry chose to use the houses of old Kotyli. Gradually, the old village of Kotyli was abandoned and the majority of the inhabitants settled in Nea Kotyli.

On their return to the villages of Pefkofyto and Chrysi, their inhabitants had to face various problems. On top of the devastation wrought by the bombing –especially by the use of incendiary bombs– all over Gramos, the existence of uncharted minefields prohibited access to certain areas (mountain paddocks, paths, etc.). One informant, Yannis Thomas, called it a 'disastrous mistake' to return to the village without checking the area and clearing it of mines. 'Here, this place has all the remains of the Civil War... My son and I went to collect herbs, we brought back some guns, I still have them there. We also brought bomb shells.' As he explained to us, his father and many of his fellow countrymen, including some girls, were killed by landmines. He himself lost his arm after a landmine explosion.<sup>29</sup> The overall context of the Civil War – forced relocation, limited support from state authorities for those who returned to the villages, and the political persecution of the leftists during the 1950s, had decisive effects on local communities. They lost their ability to reconstruct their social milieu and their modes of production, and their population was declining due to migration. Fields and pastures were abandoned, afforestation of paths, fields and orchards developed land degradation increased.

As demonstrated through the interpretation of the aerial photographs, crops, while in 1945 covered 5% of the total land available, had almost disappeared by 2015, while grasslands had decreased from 17.3% to 12%, and Forest areas increased by 22% or 1,374 ha. In the same

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<sup>29</sup> Such experiences were common in rural Greece in the 1950s and the 1960s among villagers living in areas in NW Greece where the most intensive battles of the Civil War took place. They have produced commonly held narrations presenting the decision to return to these areas as a fatal mistake. These narratives justified the migration from these areas to the main urban centers in the 1960s. Vassilis Dalkavoukis–Eleni Paschaloudi–Elias Skoulidas, eds, *Αφηγήσεις για τη δεκαετία του 1940* (Narratives of the 1940s) (Thessaloniki: Epikentro, 2012a).

period, mainly due to a reduction in grazing, the degree of tree cover increased significantly both in open and forested areas, which leads us to estimate that total tree cover increased by 95%, i.e., almost doubled.

Despite the myriad difficulties, an attempt to rebuild the villages<sup>30</sup> and reshape the landscape prevailed in the early 1950s. Agriculture gradually began not only to meet household needs but also generated a surplus, which was channelled into trade. Cereal crops gradually declined, and fodder crops dwindled to the point of nonexistence. At the same time, the use of commercial fertilisers in crops and orchards became widespread. Apiculture/beekeeping was developed from the 1950s until recently, and our informants report that in the 1950s-60s, each household had 10 to 15 beehives that satisfied its needs.

The forest continued to be a source of income for the residents in a variety of ways. The restrictions that were progressively placed on hunting eliminated the possibility of income from the sale of wolf, bear, and pinecone fur. When illegal hunting did take place, it brought in considerable income. 'The skunk had money. Back then it might had a hundred, a hundred and fifty drachmas. It was a lot of money. Four hundred drachmas a skunk was enough... That is, a flock of 150 sheep did not reach the value of one single skunk,' Vaso Evangelou and her brother Athanasios remember. The reduction of cultivated land, the abandonment of the paths, and the decrease in the number of inhabitants contributed to the restoration of the flora and fauna that had been affected between 1946 and 1949. Compared with the pre-WWII period, a decline in the population of wild geese and roe deer was reported after 1950, whereas, in contrast, the population of wild boar and bear rose.

### *Changes after the 1960s*

After the 1960s, the population of the villages rapidly decreased, as (following the trend of urbanization) many residents moved to Kasto-

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<sup>30</sup> Polymeris Voglis–Flora Tsilaga–Iasonas Chandrinou–Menelaos Charalampidis, eds, *Η εποχή των ρήξεων* (The time of Ruptures) (Thessaloniki: Epikentro, 2012). See also John O. Iatrides, *Η Ελλάδα στη δεκαετία 1940-1950. Ένα έθνος σε κρίση* (Greece in the Decade of 1940-1950. A Nation in Crisis) (Athens: Themelio, 1984); Mark M. Mazower, *After the War Was Over: Reconstructing the Family, Nation, and State in Greece, 1943-1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

ria, to the big urban centres, or abroad (mainly to Germany and Canada). Living and working conditions in the villages were difficult and many people, especially the youth, decided to abandon farming in search of better job opportunities. Georgios Evangelou from Kotyli remembers that he became a shepherd at the age of 14 because there were no other older people in the village. ‘Since the ’60s, people started leaving and moved to Kastoria. There was the furs industry growing, there was money in fur, you understand? And my whole generation moved to Kastoria.’ In 1965, he went down to Kastoria himself where he was initially a worker, before opening his own shop and making furs.

The landscape continued to transform, reflecting the historical and environmental dynamics taking place. In 1964, subsidence occurred in the lands of Pefkofyto and most of the residents moved to the village of Maniaki, 3 km southwest of Kastoria, by decision of the Prefect.<sup>31</sup> Vasiliki Mantziou (82-year-old) from Pefkofyto, recalls: ‘those who had animals were late to come down... They were given a loan of about 50,000 drachmas.’

Residents of Chrysi, Pefkos, Nea Kotyli, and Zouzouli gradually moved to the same village, creating their own neighbourhoods on the basis of the villages they left behind.<sup>32</sup> A little later, in the early 1970s, the villages changed radically. The areas were electrified, and an organised irrigation and water supply system was constructed, while at the same time the road network was completed (approximately the one is still in use today), leaving the paths in the past. Traveling became easier and faster: people had the opportunity to move more frequently between Kastoria and the villages and vice versa. In this way, trade and social contact with the neighbouring villages was facilitated. The post-Civil War social and political context, as well as the dramatic decrease in the population of the three villages of the region led to the

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<sup>31</sup> On soil degradation and its social consequences in mountainous Epirus see Green, *Notes from the Balkans*. On the desertification caused gradually in these cases see Nikos Beopoulos–Apostolos Papadopoulos, “Η ερημοποίηση ως ανθρώπινη απουσία και στειρότητα των τόπων” (Desertification as Human Absence and Sterility of Places), in *Ερημοποίηση*, 15-46.

<sup>32</sup> *Historica Kastorias, Administrative and population data of the settlements of Kastoria after the liberation (part 2): 1950-2015*, <http://istorikakastorias.blogspot.com/2015/06/2-1950-2015.html> (accessed 17-6-2015).

minimization of the importance of any differences that existed due to the linguistic and cultural origins of the populations. The devastation of Myrovliti resulted in the definitive disappearance of Muslim populations from the region. In the post-WWII decades, marital exchanges extended beyond the social networks that had existed since the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The same is true of trade networks. The pre-modern rural household economy comes full circle in the 1960s.

Since the mid-1970s, the cultivation of the fields around old Kotyli has ceased. The houses of the old settlement have been gradually destroyed because the stone was removed and used as building material in Nea Kotyli. Further changes in the landscape were also caused by the great fire of 2007. In particular, on July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2007, significant areas in the Municipality of Nestori (Kotyli, Kypseli, Giulio, Livadia, and Koziaka), the Municipality of Arrena, and the Municipality of Vitsi were reduced to ashes. The fire raged for 20 days and had a severe impact on some of the forests and mountains of Pindos, along with countless pastures and crops. According to the accurate estimate we made through photo interpretation, 304 ha were burnt in our project's area, mainly in the valley of Kotyli and the surrounding slopes. Elias Efthymiou says of old Kotyli: 'Until 2007, when the Gramos caught fire, a large part of the houses in the far mahala (i.e., neighbourhood) were still standing. There were 5-6 houses that I can say seemed to be normal houses. With flat roofs on top, with their windows of course not glazed, but they were upright.' His neighbour, Georgios Evangelou, adds: 'then came the total destruction...'

The gradual depopulation of the villages is reflected in the changes in the organisation of everyday social relations in the last two decades. Villages are sparsely populated and bear no resemblance to their past vitality. Today there are two grocery stores and two cafes and taverns in Chrysi, one cafe and tavern in Pefkofyto and one cafe and tavern in Nea Kotyli (operating occasionally). Every Saturday and Sunday, villagers go to Kastoria for shopping and entertainment. In the summer months, however, the population in Nea Kotyli and Pefkos triples and the population in Chrysi doubles. The most important annual moment of sociability is the summer festivals, where those who live in the villages and those who come from them but live in other cities in Greece and abroad celebrate together.

Agriculture gradually developed to cover the household's needs, but the large surplus is mainly channeled into local and national markets. The main crops continue to include beans, leeks, potatoes, onions, and cabbages, to which all kinds of fruit and vegetables have been added, which are grown in family bauxite gardens or in the backyard of every home. Cereal crops have been gradually being reduced, and fodder crops have dwindled to the point of extinction. The use of commercial fertilisers in crops and orchards is more widespread. In Chrysi there is a beekeeper with significant honey production and modernised facilities (electric fencing to protect the beehives from bears and other animals). The forest continues to be a source of income for the residents. Due to regulations set by the Forestry Department of the Prefecture and the gradual change in demand for the type of timber, logging practices are changing. The area is divided into three forest clusters, and the preparation of regular Management Logging Plans has been initiated. Large areas that have been abandoned since the 1940s or earlier have been gradually afforested and are now also part of the management regime. The same applies to parts of the area which were inaccessible in the decade that immediately followed the Civil War because of the minefields. Individuals and families practice logging for their household needs and organised groups log for timber that is sold to traders. The merchants buy on the basis of prior agreements and they come not only from Nestorio and Kastoria but also from Neapolis, Kozani, and the rest of Greece. Starting in the 1960s, cooperatives were created in the villages, some of which still exist today. The cooperatives established better prices in trade and simultaneously expanded the model of wage labour by hiring forest workers from neighbouring areas (Nestorio, Kastoria, etc.). The extensions of the forest road network made it possible to log many areas. The type of timber felled is beech and oak firewood, as well as pine and spruce for other uses. As the forests were restored, the total amount of harvested timber increased: according to the Management Studies, from 18,500 tonnes in the 1950s to ten times that amount, i.e., 185,000 tonnes in the last decade.

Livestock farming involves domestic animals and herds. Domestic animals include chickens (which are kept in chicken coops in the yard of the house), pigs, mules, and cattle, whereas flocks included sheep and goats. An informant from Chrysi reports that experienced village

farmers quickly multiplied the animal populations. Her father went from 30 goats and sheep in 1955 to 100 in 1960. Another informant from Chrysi reports that in the 1960s, the village had a total of 12,000 goats and sheep, and 200 oxen. However, the estimates of the present-day management studies of the local forestry authorities present lower numbers (about 5-6,000 goats and sheep). Income from the herds has helped considerably in increasing the living standards of those families who remained in the villages. Herds live near the villages in the winter months, and in more highland areas in the summer months. From the 1990s to the current day, there has been a steady increase in the number of Albanian migrants working as shepherds and living permanently or seasonally in the villages. Nomadic and semi-nomadic livestock farming (Sarakatsans and Vlachs) has been progressively decreasing. To this day, Vlachs and Sarakatsans continue to rent pastures near the ruins of Myrovliiti.

In recent decades, hybrid efforts to create other sources of income for residents have also emerged. The expansion of the road network has contributed to these efforts. A trout hatchery and a small woollen carpet manufacturing industry operated in Chrysi for some years. Some farmers turned not only to production but also to the processing and marketing of special agricultural products (herbs and medicinal plants). Lastly, the forest is an attraction for hikers and with the establishment of the River Party in Nestorio in 1978, there have been efforts to develop ecotourism in the area. Two hotels and a guesthouse operate in Nestorio on an annual basis, and a guesthouse operated in Nea Kotyli until 2016. From 2017 to 2018, refugees were settled in this hostel following an agreement with the International Organization for Migration. After an initial period of awkwardness, the few inhabitants of the village accepted the presence of refugees positively, some of whom even worked occasionally, helping the elderly, and working in gardens, yards, etc. The departure of the refugees from the hostel resulted in its closing down. Of particular interest is the development of a kind of excursion, as well as 'memory meetings,' that take place in the area and that are related to the events of the Civil War. The main factor in the development of this form of historical tourism has been the creation of the National Reconciliation Park (1988). The Park began operating in 2012 and to date has received approximately 40,000 visitors.

*Concluding Remarks*

Kotyli, Chrysi and Pefkofyto have followed a course similar to that of other highland communities of the southern Balkans over the last two and a half centuries. They were established as settlements seeking a safe distance from the Ottoman state authorities and operated within the framework of what is conventionally called ‘pre-modern economy,’ indicating a specific configuration of and by the environment. Their villagers coexisted with nomadic and semi-nomadic populations who shared the same environmental resources. The social boundaries of the three villages were indicated by the patronage and market networks in which they participated and by the marital exchange relations they maintained with other communities in their immediate geographical vicinity.

Villagers maximised their interaction with the environment by giving it new dimensions, investing in seasonal migration, and reaching a demographically critical point of enlargement in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As a landscape, the environment has been marked by villagers, who have provided it with a certain ‘logical’ coherence, and have attributed content to it. The case of the Civil War shows that this marking, when imposed externally, became an altogether ominous reality. The forcible entry of these three villages into a version of modernity took place through the ashes of the Civil War, in conditions of structurally forced abandonment of the region and the subsequent social and economic degradation of the countryside. Beginning in the 1950s, villagers from this area engaged in various forms of internal and external migration. The landscape has changed (landslides, fires, roads, etc.), while people continue to enrich it with new social meanings through memory and new productive activities.

Today, the demographic destruction of Kotyli and Pefkofyto appears irreversible. Chrysi still has some families with children and a potential for a demographically positive restart. Regardless of population data, the three villages exist in the rituals of the summer festivals where the sense of community bond is reconstituted, they exist in internet groups, and in the memory narrations established in the villagers’ associations in Kastoria, Athens and abroad. The common element in all these modes of community formation is the indiscriminate context, both as a structure and as a framework of choices, between the people and the environment.

