

CONCEPTUALISING OCCUPATION: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC  
STUDY OF DAILY LIFE IN A GREEK TOWN

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## **Abstract**

Occupation is understood within the discipline of occupational science and the profession of occupational therapy to be a particular kind of activity with links to health. However, there has been little theoretical work exploring the construction of the concept and understandings are largely dependent on the writings of Western academics writing in the English language. Situated in contemporary understandings of cultural relativity, local narratives and issues of power, and my own 30 year experience of living and working in Greece, this ethnographic study was developed to explore the construction of the concept of occupation in Greece.

Over a 30 month period I observed and participated in both celebratory and mundane occupation within the context of a small town. I explored the nature of occupation through the shared and largely tacit understandings of what was usual everyday life.

The understanding of occupation that was developed was of an ongoing multi-dimensional process. Supported by the transactional theory of John Dewey (1949), occupation as process was an integral part of all elements of the situation (incorporating transacting individual, social, temporal, spatial and climatic elements), and worked to maintain the ongoing balance of the situation. Three plots of occupation in the town were configured - maintaining the self-in-the-world, maintaining the family, and maintaining the social fabric – that tell of what people were working towards, wanting to maintain, considered desirable and valued, as shared narratives underpinning on-going everyday life.

The findings support the need for situated research that can explore local understandings of occupation. They challenge the ongoing position evident in much of the literature that views the individual as an active, knowledgeable agent, and support the importance of the developing scholarship incorporating transactional theories in understanding of occupation (Cutchin & Dickie, 2013). They also demonstrate that occupation is the process of people's engagement in the world and that health is not only expressed but also promoted through occupation.



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In carrying out this study I have come to increasingly understand the transactional nature of occupation, to understand this study as a transactional process and myself as an essential element within it. My acknowledgements and thanks cannot therefore be limited to those people who were actively engaged in one way or another with the actual processes of the study, but also must go to the numerous people who through time and across space have been part of my life that has led to this point, and who therefore, knowingly or unknowingly were part of this study.

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*“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference”*

*(Robert Frost. The Road not Taken)*

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## Prologue

*Driving to the town of Melissa<sup>1</sup>, the first view of the mountain, still a good 30 minutes away from the town, was of a soaring peak rising from the plain in front of me. Until late in spring patches of snow were still visible amongst the gullies near the summit, in autumn the peak was often shrouded in autumn mists, and in the summer the shimmering heat made it look dry and inhospitable.*

*The road to the town threaded its way around the foot of the mountain, running alongside and crisscrossing with the railway track. Now the mountain was above me and I was more aware of the small villages that the road was running through: I looked out for the changes in flowers according to the seasons, the tree trunks freshly white-washed in spring, in late autumn and winter the sides of the road covered in what looked like litter but was cotton from the harvesting, and one village where two old men were almost always sitting outside the kafeneío on upright, cane-seated, wooden chairs watching the cars go by.*

*Then the road turned a final corner and the town appeared in front of me as a cluster of red tiled roofs and stone buildings on the lower slopes of the mountain, only near the top a few houses stood out independently. Approaching the town the scene became increasingly mundane as the road passed the town's electricity sub-station, two petrol stations, the town's night club and some open fields with abandoned farming machinery. Stapled to a series of electricity poles were large posters advertising the latest happenings at the night club.*

*Sometimes I went straight into the town and parked in the open space designated as the town's unofficial car park. I walked along the main street, enjoying the familiarity of people and shops. If I crossed the lower square without seeing anyone I knew and being waylaid by an invitation for a coffee, I headed for the supermarket. Its window was an unofficial announcement board with posters advertising school events,*

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<sup>1</sup> Melissa is a pseudonym.

*excursions, the programme for local events, meetings of the associations, all night liturgies at the churches and anything else that was happening that people needed to be informed of. The small, black-framed announcements on the lamp-posts informed me of deaths and memorial services. In the supermarket I might have a chat with one of the women working there, and usually in response to my question "What's been happening?", I got the reply "What's going to be happening here?" accompanied by a shrug of the shoulders. And so I had arrived again.*



# **Chapter 1: Introduction**

This thesis presents the process and findings of a study that explored occupation in a small Greek town. This chapter will begin with an introduction to occupation and to the emergence and development of the profession of occupational therapy and later the discipline of occupational science, for both of which occupation is the core concept. This discussion will initially focus on the United States of America where occupational therapy was founded but will then move to focus on Greece, the setting of this study. An overview of Greek history provides both a background to the study but also supports the importance of exploring occupation in contexts other than Western industrialised nations where much of the theoretical development of the concept of occupation has occurred. The aims and objectives of this study will then be presented together with a discussion of the study's significance. A discussion of language issues both regarding the term occupation but also regarding this bi-lingual study will follow, before the chapter is concluded with an outline of the content of the chapters that make up this thesis.

## **A Brief Introduction to Occupation**

Occupation has been understood to be a particular form of activity with close links to health since the founding of the profession of occupational therapy in the late 1910s in the United States of America. Early assumptions of the profession, influenced by the Arts and Craft movement of the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, included beliefs regarding the curative powers of art and craft work, as through making beautiful things man could enhance his creativity and spirituality (Hocking, 2007). Also of influence was the Moral Treatment Movement, promoting notions of rational man and the importance of work and a range of recreational activities within a structure of regular habits (Clark & Larson, 1993; Reed, Hocking, & Smythe, 2013). The newly founded profession of occupational therapy was based on the belief that "sick minds, sick bodies, sick souls, may be healed through occupation" (Dunton, 1919, cited in Clark & Larson, 1993, p.

45), with an understood importance of a whole round of balanced daily activities to health. Ideals of social transformation were also present (Pollard & Sakellariou, 2012d) with an awareness that there were aspects of society, for example, industrialisation, that were detrimental to not only individuals, but to society as a whole.

However, as the 20<sup>th</sup> century progressed many changes took place in all areas of society that gradually impacted on occupational therapy practice and understandings of occupation. The two World Wars resulted in injuries to individuals that required specific treatments, while the re-building that followed both wars demanded workers who could contribute to the effort. With developing knowledge in medicine, neuroscience and genetics, science created the notion of a body with components that could be fixed and parts transplanted or replaced (Blaxter, 2004). The increasing individualism, rise in secularism and consumerism of the modern world promoted the idea of an individual who was responsible for their own health and happiness (Carlisle, Henderson, & Hanlon, 2009). Within this changing society occupational therapy increasingly aligned with the medical model of health. It developed a mechanistic approach that focused on the individual's disease or trauma and offered practical strategies, adaptations and treatments for specific body dysfunctions that would rehabilitate people to live 'normal' lives (Clark & Larson, 1993; Kielhofner, 1997). During this period occupational therapy began to spread throughout the world; the World Federation of Occupational Therapists was founded in 1952 with ten members and expanded rapidly (World Federation of Occupational Therapists, 2013).

However, the past 40 years have seen an ever growing movement to bring occupational therapy back to its roots, that is, to occupation. The first steps in this movement were in the late 1950s and the work of Mary Reilly who was concerned about the increasing fragmentation of the profession without a coherent philosophy to guide it (Clark & Larson, 1993). Furthermore, there began to be a greater focus on occupation in the profession's scholarship and practice (Kielhofner, 1985, 1997; Law, 1996; Law, Polatajko, Baptiste, & Townsend, 1997). The perceived importance of occupation and a need for further research led to the founding of the discipline of occupational science in 1989 at the University of Southern California, with the expressed aim being "the systematic study of the human as an occupational being" (Clark et al., 1991, p. 300). Rapidly spreading to Australia, New Zealand, Canada,

Japan and parts of Europe, the development of occupational science has led to proliferating scholarship from a number of disciplines exploring occupation from a variety of perspectives, the establishment of the *Journal of Occupational Science* in 1993, and the International Society for Occupational Science in 2000.

In this new era of occupation an attempt was made to define occupation in a broad way that was clearly accessible to all and would unify understandings. The scholars associated with the newly founded discipline defined it as: “chunks of culturally and personally meaningful activity in which humans engage that can be named in the lexicon of our culture” (Clark et al., 1991, p. 301). Human beings were seen to be able to “realise their sense of life’s meaning through purposeful activity” and that occupation could have a positive or negative influence on health (Clark & Larson, 1993, p. 48).

However, this revival of occupation has raised a variety of new issues, perhaps the most fundamental being the nature of the concept of occupation and whether this concept is universal. The 21<sup>st</sup> century world is a postmodern world that recognises diversity, local narratives and issues of power (Whiteford, Townsend & Hocking, 2000). Therefore, while a focus on the return to the roots of the profession, that is, to occupation, should be celebrated, it must also be questioned to whose roots, that is, to whose understandings of occupation, are we returning? Occupational therapy developed in the USA originally, rapidly followed primarily by English speaking industrialised nations. Many countries, including Greece as will be discussed in continuation, were introduced to occupational therapy at a time when the profession was dominated by the medical model and where a focus on the functioning body enabled a relatively common approach throughout the world. Returning to a focus on occupation as a type of activity linked to daily life and potentially to health, brings to the fore issues around the cultural relativity of occupation and the nature of occupation as a constructed concept. While it has been recognised that occupations are usually socially and culturally defined and sanctioned (Townsend, 1997a; Yerxa, Clark et al., 1990), there has been limited discussion that the core features of the conceptualisation of occupation as a particular type of activity are only consistent with a Western point of view (Darnell, 2002; Iwama, 2006; Reed et al., 2013). It is these issues that formed the foundation for this study that aimed to explore occupation in a small Greek town.

In Greece, where I lived and worked for 30 years, the profession of occupational therapy was introduced in 1946 through the work of an enlightened Greek woman, Bilio O’Caffrey, who had been introduced to occupational therapy in Britain. She worked with the International and Greek Red Cross to develop occupational therapy in a number of hospitals for war veterans. Between 1950 and 1961 three educational programmes in occupational therapy were held by the Greek Red Cross for volunteer nurses. These were originally led by Roula Grigoriadou, the first qualified occupational therapist in Greece, who had received a scholarship to study in the UK. Occupational therapy’s ongoing development was considerably supported by a further three Greek women who graduated from occupational therapy programmes in the USA in the 1950s and on returning to Greece opened departments in paediatric, psychiatric and rehabilitation hospitals. They were Lina Sirrou-Kostaki, Anna Deligianni-Panouli and Sofia Douma-Anesti, and these women were the first lecturers at the school of occupational therapy which opened in 1977 (Syrou-Costaki, 1995). Their view of occupational therapy that was influenced by their American education of the 1950’s and the medically dominated Greek health service, led to an educational focus on physical and mental functions and therapeutic activity. The idea of restoring a focus on occupation itself must be considered in this context where occupational therapy was an imported profession and had not emerged organically. These difficulties are perhaps most simply illustrated by language: there is no word in Greek that has a conceptualisation similar to that of occupation as used within occupational therapy and occupational science in English.

The term *ergasiotherapía* was originally used to translate the name of the profession occupational therapy, *ergasía* being the Greek term used to translate the word ‘work’. During the 1980s the name was changed to *ergotherapía*, ergo also referring to work, but more in the sense of an important construction, creative or life work, for example a road bridge or Beethoven’s work (“Ergo”, n.d.). It is difficult to know whether at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there existed in Greece a concept around activity similar to that of occupation as understood in the USA. However, the absence of a word expressing the concept of occupation suggests there was not; moreover, the brief review of the history of Greece that follows suggests major differences between the two countries (while not suggesting a cultural conformity within each country), a review which also provides a background to this study.

## **The Setting of the Study: Greece**

Greece, as any country, can only be understood within the setting and particularly the historical events that have led up to the present. This may be particularly true of Greeks for whom, it is said, “their past and even their ancient and mythological past lives and breathes” (Sarafis, 1990, p.125). Greece is located in South-Eastern Europe, its islands stretching into the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas. It borders to the north and east with Turkey, Bulgaria, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania, and it is often said to stand at the crossroads of East and West.

The civilisation of ancient Greece is well known, but perhaps less well known are the events of the two thousand years between that and the present period. The art, philosophy and teachings of ancient Greece remained influential within the Roman Empire that followed it. Greece was part of the Eastern Roman Empire, later known as the Byzantine Empire, which was established in Constantinople in 330 A.D. with Greek as the official language. Islam and Eastern Christianity began to be mutually influential in many areas: intellectual, philosophical, scientific and even theological, leading to an increasingly distinctive Christian East. The final exchange of excommunications between Eastern and Western Christian Churches, between Rome and Constantinople, took place in 1054 (“Christianity”, n.d.). The Greek branch of the resulting Eastern Orthodox Church continues to be the dominant religion in Greece today.

Constantinople fell to the Ottoman Empire in 1453 and for the next 400 years Greece was part of that empire, until the struggle for independence that began in 1821. Although part of the Ottoman Empire the Greeks were able to maintain their own language and religion and they took part in administration under the control of the local Pasha for much of the period (Clogg, 2002).

The War of Independence (1821-1832) led to the emergence of Greece as a nation state, (although the contemporary borders have only been established since 1947 when the Dodecanese Islands were ceded to Greece from Italy (Clogg, 2002)). However, the circumstances of the ‘birth’ of the nation led to the particular characteristics of the national identity that emerged. The recognition of Greece’s

independence from the Ottoman Empire has been said to be the result of the first ever European intervention for national liberation (Tsoukalas, 1999). This was mainly due to the philhellenism of the Western European Romantics and their adoption of Ancient Greece as the cradle of modern civilisation (including their own), a view which supported European expansionism in the Balkan and Mediterranean by providing a perceived racial superiority against the barbarian – the Orient – including the Ottoman Empire (Sarafis, 1990; Tsoukalas, 1999; Tzanelli, 2004).

At the time of independence the Greek people were on the whole illiterate and living in considerable poverty, as were the majority of the peoples of the region (Roudometof, 2010; Tsoukalas, 1999). They had also been living with the cultural patterns referred to as Romeic (Herzfeld, 1987) that had emerged during the 400 years of being part of the Ottoman Empire, and preceding that the Byzantine Empire. However these patterns were abruptly overlaid with the liberal political institutions and legal codes based on individual rights of the Western world of their liberators (Paxson, 2004; Tsoukalas, 1991), together with a Western idea of a nation descended from the glorious past of ancient Greece (Tsoukalas, 1999), expressed in the notion of Hellenism (Herzfeld, 1987). The tension between the Romeic and the Hellenic have resulted in ongoing issues of culture and identity between East and West, tradition and modernity, rational and magical thinking (du Boulay, 2009; Paxson, 2004; Tsoukalas, 1999). In terms of everyday life some of these cultural issues will be evident throughout this thesis.

Greece was slow to emerge from poverty and to develop economically. The crippling poverty following the First World War was exacerbated by the mass immigration of hundreds of thousands of Greeks expelled from Asia Minor in the early 1920's following the unsuccessful Greek-Turkish war of 1919. Following the Second World War although British troops strongly supported the Greek resistance fighters, they also confronted the communists within Greece, exacerbating the situation and leading to the Civil War from 1944 to 1949 (Tzanelli, 2004). The Civil War delayed rebuilding after the Second World War and it was followed by a succession of conservative governments together with an ineffective monarchy culminating in seven years of military dictatorship (1967-1974), all of which limited social development throughout this period. The fall of the dictatorship following an uprising by students was the first signs of change; freedom of expression was re-established and a referendum made the country a republic

(Sarafis, 1990). Throughout the 1970s the socialist party (PASOK) gained popularity. It achieved a vast majority in the national elections of 1981 becoming the first socialist government in Greece, leading to a number of reforms including civil rights, the separation of church and state and the foundation of the National Health Service in 1983 (Clogg, 2002; Nikolentzos & Mays, 2008). In the same year Greece became the 10<sup>th</sup> member of the European Union, bringing the country firmly onto the European stage and leading to the development of infrastructure but at the same time growing inequality and continued poverty for many (Zaidi & de Vos, 2001). Greece joined the eurozone in 2001 and signs of economic vulnerability began to be evident in 2004. From 2010 this became a major crisis, leading to unemployment at 18% in 2011, with youth unemployment at 44% (Eurostat, 2013), increasing emigration, a rise in nationalism and anger at foreign interference (Skouras, 2013).

Greece traditionally is an agricultural society, with farming, fishing and local services employing the majority of the population. No widespread industrialisation took place, partly due to Greece being part of the Ottoman Empire until the 1830s, but also due to its extremely limited natural resources. Society was structured around the *nikokyrió* (the household), which was a self-sufficient, family-based enterprise (Salamone & Stanton, 1986). It has been noted that the word 'free-time' has not been in use until recently, due in part to the poverty, particularly of the post war period, when other countries in Europe were undergoing rebuilding and expansion (Papageorgiou, 1993), and that there is no Greek word for hobby, although the English word has now been introduced to everyday speech.

To summarise, Greece as a modern day state is less than 200 years old. As part of the Ottoman Empire and of the Eastern Orthodox Church, it has been suggested that the massive changes experienced in Western Europe over the past 500 years – the Reformation, the emergence of the Protestant religion and industrialisation, the English, French and American civil wars, and the work of the philosophers, scientists and artists – were experienced only by those sons of the merchant classes able to study in the universities of the West, and had probably almost no impact on the majority of people, particularly those living on mainland Greece within the Ottoman Empire (Clogg, 2002). Since becoming a nation-state Greece has seen not only economic development but also development of the education and health systems in

particular, and is currently a full member of the European Union. However, like all regions within Europe, it has characteristics that reflect its diverse and unique geographical, historical, economic and cultural situation.

This brief introduction to Greece together with contemporary discussions of the diversity and situatedness of knowledge and meanings, indicate the need to explore what are the characteristics and nature of occupation in Greece.

## **Purpose of the Study**

A number of factors have therefore led to the development of this study. Of primary importance was the re-emerging focus on occupation and the importance of occupation to health, supported by the scholarship of the discipline of occupational science. At the same time, the increasing understanding of the diversity of people, cultures and their occupations (Iwama, 2003, 2006), together with recognition of the dominance of the Western English language literature (and thereby knowledge) throughout the world (Frank & Zemke, 2008), suggested a need for research on occupation that was localised and specific.

Therefore this study aimed to explore the everyday activities of adults living in a small Greek town. The specific objectives were:

- To explore the social structures, institutions, spatial and temporal factors which influence the emergence of everyday activities of people in the town
- To explore the nature of Greek adults' everyday activities (what do they do, why do they do these activities, how are they planned and executed, the people involved, the meanings of the activities)
- To explore which everyday activities or which characteristics of these activities are perceived to be linked to health



- To discuss how everyday activity, as conceptualised by the Greek adults, relates to the current understandings of occupation within the literature.

The aim and objectives are presented here as they were originally formulated. The word activity was deliberately used to expand the boundaries of the study beyond any existing theoretical conceptualisations of occupation, to enable a wide and unrestricted exploration of everyday activity in a specific place and time and its potential links to health. Issues of language will be discussed more fully below.

## **Significance of the Study**

This study aims to contribute to the body of work that is focusing on developing greater understanding of occupation. While primarily located within occupational science this study will also contribute to occupational therapy practice and the significance of the study to both will be considered.

Occupational science was established as a discipline with the specific aim to study the human as an occupational being, based on the belief that humans are “most true to their humanity” when engaged in occupation (Clark et al., 1991, p. 300). While recognising its roots in occupational therapy, occupational science aimed to be a basic science exploring the form, function, meaning, and sociocultural and historical contexts of occupation (Clark et al., 1991).

Two main, complementary directions may be discerned in the development of occupational science scholarship, both of which are of importance to this study. The first, driven by the work of Ann Wilcock (1993, 1998, 2006), has been a recognition of the fundamental link between occupation and health, leading to an understanding of the central place that occupation has (whether or not it is yet fully acknowledged) in the health promotion of individuals, communities and populations. This focus on occupation and health has been extended by the work of Elizabeth Townsend (1997b) and taken up by scholars such as Gail Whiteford and Clare Hocking (Hocking, 2013; Whiteford & Hocking, 2012) in a critical approach that extends the understanding of the importance

of occupation to health within a framework of human rights and a call for occupational justice.

These important ideas have been encapsulated in the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (2006) statement on Human Rights, and in the Mission Statement of the International Society for Occupational Science (Wicks, 2012), providing a clear requirement for both occupational therapists and occupational scientists to work more specifically within a recognition of the human right to occupation and to promote health through occupation. Emerging from these overarching directives is a need to understand occupation at the local level as it emerges in specific places and with specific people, and it is here that this particular study makes its contribution.

The ideas of promoting health through occupation and occupational rights are not an academic discussion but are part of an emerging drive to place occupational therapy practice to the forefront of health promotion with communities and groups, influencing policy and contributing to the practical development of promoting health for all through occupation (Moll, Gewurtz, Krupa, & Law, 2013; Scriven & Atwal, 2004; Wilcock, 2006). However, in order to contribute to development and change occupational therapists need to develop a critical approach (Whiteford & Townsend, 2011) to their practice and to their understandings of everyday occupation in their own communities and the possibilities for occupation (Laliberte Rudman, 2010) that emerge from the particular context. Critique of the individualism and the importance of paid work evident in much occupational therapy practice and theory is an example of an emerging questioning of what is important for different peoples in different places around the world (Darnell, 2002; Dickie, Cutchin, & Humphry, 2006; Reed et al., 2013). This study is the first to explore the concept of occupation in Greece and will provide opportunity for debate, reflection and the development of further research amongst the occupational therapists of Greece, but also in other countries that in a similar way have not yet engaged in research exploring occupation in their local context.

Occupation as a concept emerged to express a particular way of doing everyday life that was seen to be good, usual and important for health. As such it incorporated the values, beliefs and attitudes as well as the practical, economic and social

circumstances of the context in which it emerged. After a period of increased medicalisation of health and a focus on disease and illness there is again emerging an expanded notion of health as a way of living that is important for all (Wilcock, 2006). Occupation is a fundamental part of this understanding of health. This study takes place within an understanding of occupation as part of a global issue around health justice (Venkatapuram, 2011) related to local issues around how people live their day to day lives.

## **Issues of Language**

Issues of language were particularly important in this study. Words, translation of words and the concepts contained within and underpinning words, were one of the issues that led to its development. The study was carried out in Greek, but written in English, and the importance of these issues will be discussed in the chapter discussing the methodology of the study. However, there are additional issues regarding language, including the use of the word occupation itself, use of Greek within this text, and the presentation of my own position within this study, which will be discussed here.

### **Occupation.**

My interest in exploring occupation in Greece outside the conceptual understandings existing in English language theory, led me to framing this study in terms of everyday activity. In this way I wished to maintain my awareness that in Greece our understanding of occupation has primarily originated in the English language theoretical literature, and by using the word activity I hoped to remain open to an emerging understanding of occupation from the research process. I therefore used the Greek word for activity – *drastiriótita*, which was also more readily understood by the general population than the word *érgo*, usually used to translate occupation by Greek occupational therapists, but which does not have the same conceptual structure as the English word occupation and has a different use by the general population.

During the study, while significant differences were evident between activity in the town and the English conceptualisation of occupation, a key similarity emerged; activity/occupation was of central importance to the interaction or transaction of people with their world. Whatever the causes, structures and influences on occupation, people's doing was essential to their engagement with the world, to their being in the world, and ideally to building healthy lives in the world.

Due to this perceived fundamental similarity between peoples' doing as observed and the English concept and the importance of this understanding to the possibility for healthy lives, I have used the term occupation throughout the thesis, in order to promote the concept and related discussion. However it will become obvious that the word occupation as I use it has a conceptual structure distinct from that which frequently underpins the word in the English language literature.

### **Greek words and transliteration.**

Exploring everyday life and activity in Greece inevitably revealed a large number of terms and concepts for which there were no exact translation into English. While it would be possible to use in this thesis a word that was 'almost equivalent', this would have risked conflating two similar but different concepts. I therefore have retained in the text the Greek word in italics followed by an approximate English translation in brackets, as in this example: *h yeitoniá* (the neighbourhood). In transcribing the Greek alphabet I have followed the approach to transliteration presented by Paxson (2004). Greek words presented in this way in the text are also included in *Appendix A*, where a brief description is provided of the word and particularly significant differences with the English word used to translate it are emphasised. I hope that the use of Greek words in the text will enable the reader to remain sensitised to the inevitable gaps in understanding between the worlds that the two languages represent. I also wish to emphasise here that I am not a linguist and my knowledge of Greek is not that of a native speaker, but that of an adult living in the country for a number of years, and my own understandings are therefore also partial.

## **Writing myself into the text.**

As will be explored more thoroughly in later chapters, I recognise my own position in the construction and presentation of the understandings and interpretations that are presented in this thesis. Therefore, throughout the text I refer to myself in the first person, aiming in this way to clearly portray my place in the study and its findings, and the influences of me, as a particular individual, on the kinds of doings and conversations with which I engaged with the people of the town.

## **Organisation of the Thesis**

This thesis presents the process and findings of research that aimed to explore occupation in the town of Melissa (a pseudonym), a small market town in central Greece. In this opening chapter I have outlined the background, purpose and significance of the study as it is placed within the discipline of occupational science and the profession of occupational therapy. Chapter 2 presents further theoretical foundations for the study, including an exploration of the current conceptualisation of occupation, discussion of a number of theories that explore activity and the relationship between occupation, person and context, and finally a review of current understandings of health. Following this introduction to the theoretical foundations of the study, Chapter 3 turns to the methodology followed and discusses in detail the research design, from the underpinning ontological understandings, my position as researcher, to the specific methods, data collection, and the analytic process employed. That chapter aims to enable the reader to consider the methodology and the quality of the entire research process, before turning to the presentation of the findings which is the subject of Chapters 4 to 8. Together these chapters aim to present a narrative of occupation in the town, each chapter discussing a different aspect. Chapter 4 discusses the nature and characteristics of occupation itself, that is, the action of the narrative. Chapter 5 presents the situation as a whole, the context or setting with which occupation emerged. Chapters 6, 7 and 8 each develop a particular plot of the narrative; each plot draws together the diverse elements of daily life to explore a particular aspect of what people are working to maintain or achieve through their occupation. Together these

chapters present occupation as the ongoing doing of the daily life which the people of the town understand to be 'usual', often described in Greek as *h kathimerinótita* (the everyday or more literally - everydayness). The thesis is completed by three brief descriptions of my lived experience in the town. The prologue introduced the town in the same way that I experienced it each time I drove to the town. A short passage prior to the presentation of the findings that begins in Chapter 4 provides a brief depiction of my daily life in the town. The postscript describes my impressions of the town in May 2013 on a return visit, shortly before completing this thesis.

## **Chapter 2: Background**

In this chapter I discuss the theoretical foundations of the study. The chapter is divided into four sections reflecting the main themes: conceptualising occupation; theoretical understandings of the relationship between individual, context and action; exploring agency and shared understandings of action including values and ethics; and contemporary understandings of health. This study is positioned within the discipline of occupational science, and this discussion will draw on a range of literature not only from occupational science and occupational therapy, but also from sociology, anthropology, human geography and philosophy, recognising that many other disciplines, while not focusing specifically on occupation, contribute to the synthesis of knowledge around it (Clark et al., 1991; 1990).

### **Introduction**

My intention in this chapter is to initially explore the conceptualisation of occupation as it has emerged in the Western world and is expressed in the English language literature, this being the predominant source of discussion on occupation at this time. By exploring this current conceptualisation I wish to question the perceived universality of occupation, not only in regards to the proposed characteristics of occupation, but also in relation to the nature of the relationship between person, context and occupation which lies at the core of the concept. In order to explore occupation as a particular form of action I will draw on alternative activity theories, and particularly those of Giddens (1984), Bourdieu (1972/ 1977) and Dewey (1922/2007; Dewey & Bentley, 1949). The work of these theorists will provide support for the idea of the local and contextualised nature of occupation, moving away from a primary focus on the individual as active agent. Their work will also be used to discuss the shared understanding of occupation, held mainly as tacit, practical knowledge amongst groups

or communities of people. This practical knowledge will also be explored through the work of Paul Ricoeur (1984) regarding the pre-narrative nature of everyday experience. In addition, his discussion of the essentially ethical nature of everyday action will lead to consideration of the direction of occupation or the reasons with which things are done. This discussion will lend support to the idea of occupation as a construction that forms and is formed by what is regarded as usual or even 'normal' everyday life amongst groups of people, and to theories that embed health in everyday living. The final section will provide a brief overview of contemporary discussions around health within which this study is placed.

By the end of the chapter I will make the proposal, grounded in the discussion and review of the literature, that occupation is an integral part of the particular situation or context in which it emerges, and that people within that situation share a tacit understanding, based in practical knowledge, of what is a usual daily life. This shared understanding of what is usual, includes what is done, how, when, where, with whom and why, and the value attached to these; a shared understanding of the quality or nature of occupation itself as the doing of everyday life. Finally, this taken-for-granted everyday occupation should be considered in relation to notions of healthy living for individuals and communities.

## **Occupation**

This study emerged from my interest in exploring occupation in Greece, based on my experience of the difficulties and tensions of applying the existing English language conceptualisations of occupation in education and practice in that country, and supported by my own experience of the differences between daily life in the United Kingdom (my country of origin) and Greece. These experiences were supported by emerging theoretical discussions in the literature suggesting that conceptualisations of occupation were based in a particular socio-cultural discourse, and that the relevance of these to other places, cultures or societies needed to be questioned (Iwama, 2003, 2006). These discussions within occupational science and occupational therapy are situated within the wider discussions of the post-modern world. These support diversity



and local meanings and challenge grand or universal narratives (Lyotard, 1979), challenge the imperialism of western cultures (Said, 1978/2003), and recognise the constructed nature of scientific knowledge (Kuhn, 1996). Experience and knowledge are understood to be local and relative, while the constructed nature of professions such as occupational therapy, emerging at particular times and particular places, indicates the importance of questioning the nature of the knowledge that they produce and distribute throughout the world (Hammell, 2009a). With the vast majority of literature published in English and arising primarily (though not exclusively) from English speaking societies, the danger of a Western hegemony in understanding of occupation becomes evident (Frank & Zemke, 2008).

It is therefore important to explore current understandings of occupation and to consider how these understandings may be situated within the context in which the concept has been constructed. This will also facilitate consideration of whether there are aspects or core features which are universal or which need to be explored universally. This discussion has been informed by and aspects of it have been published as an article, presented in *Appendix B* (Kantartzis & Molineux, 2011) and as a book chapter, presented in *Appendix C* (Kantartzis & Molineux, 2012).

Occupational therapy emerged in the United States of America in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century founded on the idea that occupation was important for the maintenance of the balance of the organism in the world. Industrialisation and the effects of the First World War were an important part of the context within which occupation was recognised to be a particular form of activity that offered opportunities not only for a balanced rhythm to the day but for pleasure and satisfaction in completion and achievement (Meyer, 1922/1977). Using the word occupation rather than activity expressed this expanded notion of a particular form of health-supporting activity. Occupation in the English language already had a rich conceptual structure, derived from the Latin root “occupatio” meaning to seize or take possession and was still used for the powerful act of occupying a country. It was also used to refer to a particular job or profession (‘what is your occupation?’), but also to the occupation of one’s self, and one’s time and attention (“Occupation”, 2009). However, occupation also had a versatile grammatical structure, able to act as not only a noun, but also as verb, adverb and adjective. Occupation in English not only names particular things (an occupation),

but also acts on time, place and self (to occupy/to be occupied) and provides description or characterisation (occupationally). Occupation is a word that powerfully expresses an individual acting on their context and the temporal flow, as well as a quality and characteristic of particular forms of action. In other languages, even those also based in Latin, this complexity is not always evident, as the European working group of which I was a member discovered (ENOTHE Terminology Project Group, 2006). In Greek there is no one word which incorporates the conceptualisation and grammatical richness of occupation in English. These conceptual variations suggest that the English and Greek speaking worlds, at least, do not share the same system of thought around the form of activity known as occupation (Shklarov, 2007).

Perhaps due to the underpinning complexity of the term in English, there have been numerous definitions of occupation with no single one achieving universal acceptance (Molineux, 2009). Occupational science, emerging as a scientific discipline at the end of the 1980s, immediately addressed the already thorny issue of what was occupation. Founders of the discipline attempted to provide a jargon free and accessible definition, defining it as “specific ‘chunks’ of activity within the ongoing stream of human behaviour which are named in the lexicon of the culture” (Yerxa, Clark et al., 1990, p. 5), suggesting that it could be considered at both a concrete level, such as fishing, or cooking, and at an abstract level, such as playing or working. At the same time early writers in occupational science reiterated the importance of occupation to health and wellbeing (Clark & Larson, 1993; Clark et al., 1991; Yerxa, Clark et al., 1990).

Therefore, from the emergence of occupational therapy and more recently occupational science, occupation has been named and framed as a certain type of activity. The core characteristics describing the nature of occupation are most frequently identified as including that occupation is active, purposeful and meaningful (Clark & Larson, 1993; Hocking, 2000; McLaughlin Gray, 1997; Molineux, 2009; Yerxa, 2000), contextualised (temporarily, spatially, socially and culturally) (Molineux, 2009; Pierce, 2001b; Townsend, 1997b; Whiteford, Townsend, & Hocking, 2000), and contributes to the construction and expression of self identity (Laliberte-Rudman, 2002; Phelan & Kinsella, 2009; Unruh, 2004). What must be considered is to what extent these core characteristics may be considered universal.

Regarding the concept of 'active' it is obvious that any form of activity, of which occupation is one, involves action. However, in descriptions of occupation emphasis is given to the active, self-directed individual, engaged in self-initiated occupation under conscious control (McLaughlin Gray, 1997; Yerxa, 2000). Being active is applied in powerful terms to the individual who is able to seize opportunities, shape their own future, reach their own targets (D. Nelson, 1996; Reilly, 1962), take charge of their lives and become masters of their environment (Yerxa, 1993). The individualism and the idea of the autonomous agent inherent in this conceptualisation has been challenged both by those writing from alternative cultural perspectives which demonstrate more collectivistic features (Iwama, 2003, 2006), and from within Northern America by those challenging the idea of autonomy for all without considering the existing societal constraints around poverty, gender, race, religion, etc. (Hammell, 2009a). Additionally, the tremendous drive for action evident in the preceding descriptions has been described as characteristic of Protestant and particularly Puritan societies, influenced by the work ethic and the production policies of industrialised nations (Abrahams, 1986; Delacroix & Nielsen, 2001; Weber, 1958/2003). That there is a drive to be active which is characteristic of modern societies is evidenced by those who criticise it, for example, as marginalising those who are not able or are not willing to be busy (Fortuijn et al., 2006), for reducing the value of unstructured activities and time (R. Larson & Seepersad, 2003) and for reducing people to only knowing themselves through their activities (do Rozario, 1998).

A second, frequently described, characteristic of occupation is that it is purposeful. Again, this may be said to be a characteristic of all action and may be viewed from a variety of perspectives. For the founders of the profession the purpose of occupation was to provide an alternative and more health promoting way of living for those who they saw as suffering from illnesses caused by problems of adaptation to life in industrialised society (Meyer, 1922/1977). The importance of adaptation remained a central aspect of occupational therapy practice, and occupational science developed an expanded notion of adaptation to incorporate moral agency where adaptation through purposefully orchestrated occupation enabled quality of life for individuals and groups (Frank, 1996; Molineux, 2009). In recent years Wilcock (1993) has explored in depth the relationship between occupation and health, proposing that occupation provides for the basic human needs of survival, the development and maintenance of

skills, and prompts and rewards the use of capacities. These theories that explore the purpose of occupation in relation to adaptation and the promotion of health are of central importance and will be further explored in later sections of the chapter. However, despite their foundational importance, discussion of the purpose of occupation is more frequently aimed at naming particular types or categories of occupation which should be performed. This again has been a constant feature of occupational therapy since its early years, when the division of the day into time for work, rest and leisure was important for labour organisations concerned with industrialised working conditions (General Conference of the International Labour Organization, 1919), and Meyer's (1922/1977) suggestion of the importance of time for each in a healthy life style. The categories of work/productivity, leisure and self-care have continued to be seen as important purposes of occupation (e.g. Law et al., 1997). However, there has been criticism of these categories as being simplistic, value laden in emphasising the centrality of work, creating a dichotomy of work and leisure which is not always present, and ignoring the individual experience (Hammell, 2009a; Jonsson, 2008; Pierce, 2001a). It has also been argued that all doing has purpose and meaning however banal (Pollard & Sakellariou, 2012a), and occupation undoubtedly has a purpose in the sense that it is not random and has some direction. However, it seems that there has been insufficient exploration of how and from what or whom that direction emerges and towards what it is focused.

That occupation is meaningful is a third characteristic widely discussed in the literature. It is this characteristic which is perhaps most central to the idea of occupation as different from action or activity and of occupation's importance for wellbeing. Focus here is on the experience of occupation (Hasselkus, 2002) and the suggestion that through occupation human beings uncover their life's meaning (Clark & Larson, 1993), that is, the purpose and significance of life (Ikiugu, 2005). Occupation here has a complex conceptualisation, including not only doing and purpose but also being, belonging and becoming through occupation (Hammell, 2004; Wilcock, 1999). Meaning has been explored both in relation to the experience of occupation but also to how individuals link their lives into meaningful wholes through narratives of their occupational lives (Hasselkus, 2002; Kielhofner et al., 2002), providing a sense of continuity between past, present and proposed future (Ikiugu, 2005). However, again there has been criticism that these understandings of meaning represent the

hegemony of an affluent element of Western society who have the luxury to uncover life's meaning through their daily occupation (Hammell, 2009a), while as a discourse the search for meaning has become prominent in the increasingly secular West, suggesting alternative experiences may be important in more religious societies. Alternative perspectives have been proposed, for example focusing on the values that are prerequisites for meaning (Persson, Erlandsson, Eklund, & Iwarsson, 2001), and the importance of cultural, social and familial meanings (Hocking, 2000; Hocking, Wright-St.Clair, & Burayong, 2002). However, these perspectives continue to particularly focus on the individual and on meaning experienced at a discursive level. Further exploration of the nature and location of meaning, including meaning at a tacit level, its relation to purpose, and to shared spiritual and cultural meanings in other contexts may be useful.

The temporal nature of occupation has also been central to discussions, with occupation being described as something which fills the "stream of time" (Kielhofner, 2002, p. 68), or which organises time (Law, Polatajko, Baptiste, & Townsend, 2002; Yerxa, Frank et al., 1990), and which has a specific beginning and end (E. Larson, Wood, & Clark, 2003; McLaughlin Gray, 1997). It is recognised that time gained value and structure with clocks, industrialisation and the privatisation of leisure opportunities (Carrasco & Mayordomo, 2005; Farnworth & Fossey, 2003). The increasing pace and complexity of life in industrial society created the need for highly dependable and structured temporal patterns (E. Larson & Zemke, 2003) and routines within families and between groups in society became established. Again it may be postulated that the importance of maintaining temporal rhythms, while based in the diurnal, circadian and seasonal rhythms of the natural world, gained a particular focus in the specific world in which theories of occupation emerged. Additionally industrialisation led to the 'compartmentalisation' of much of daily life - work taking place in the work place, rest and self care in the home - while organised leisure opportunities emerged with the increasing privatisation of leisure (Lefebvre, 1958/2008). Occupation as chunks of activity such as work and play, going to the gym or cinema, reflect this temporal and spatial organisation of daily life.

The preceding discussion of the conceptualisation of occupation as situated in a particular time and place is coherent with an understanding of reality as constructed

and relative (Berger & Luckman, 1966). Understandings of occupation appear to be closely related to the understood nature of everyday life of the context (Western European) in which these theoretical understandings were developed. However, if occupation is a constructed concept, how can occupation be approached and understood in other locations and cultures? An expanded understanding of occupation that emerged towards the end of the 1990s was an important step in facilitating such an exploration. Evident in the definition of occupation as “all the things that people, need, want or have to do” (Wilcock, 2006, p. xiv), this simple but all-encompassing definition indicated that a broader and more foundational understanding of occupation was emerging. However, in its broadness this definition raised further questions, which included: what are those things that people need, want or have to do? Who or what is their author? What is their relative importance, particularly related to supporting health, and how is that determined? And perhaps most importantly, is occupation a universal concept or is it a construction of Western, English-speaking society? In order to explore these questions a greater understanding of the emergence of occupation/activity was required, leading to exploration of theories of occupation, activity and action, which will be discussed in the following section.

## **Exploring Activity, Individual and Context**

As is evident from the discussion in the preceding section both occupational therapy and later occupational science have held an ontological position which viewed the individual as an active, knowledgeable agent. Unlike other disciplines, for example sociology and anthropology, occupational therapy and occupational science did not engage in the structure versus agency debate, and until quite recently maintained focus on the individual as active agent. Although this view has undoubtedly shifted over the past decade, with discussion of structural factors influencing occupation (e.g. Laliberte Rudman, 2010; Stadnyk, Townsend, & Wilcock, 2011), an understanding of an active individual at centre remains dominant. However, if occupation is understood to be influenced by the context in which it emerges, as indicated by the preceding discussion, there is a need to explore theoretical approaches which will provide an expanded and perhaps more balanced discussion of the inter-relationship between

context, individual and occupation. This entails not so much an exploration of the nature of occupation and its particular characteristics but a more fundamental exploration of the way occupation/activity emerges.

One of the key contemporary theorists of social action exploring these issues is the British sociologist Anthony Giddens. His theory of structuration facilitated my exploration of occupation as a form of activity, as it specifically addressed the problem of the dualism of subject and society suggesting a reciprocal relationship of mutual influence over time (Giddens, 1979/2007, 1984). According to structuration theory the activity of actors continually reproduces the conditions which made that activity possible. Social systems precede chronologically the individual, who is born into a society of existing positions, rules and resources, that is, the structuring properties of social systems. The most enduring social systems are those which may be referred to as institutions and which relate to the organisation of belief, government, education and economics. It is important to note that structuration theory does not propose a structural view whereby the individual is bound by societal roles and norms, but rather that institutional structures influence, but do not predetermine, the individual's actions (Fleetwood, 2008). In turn, the individual's actions (re)produce but also transform these structures as individuals make choices and engage in creative action (Giddens, 1984). Structuration theory therefore supports the idea that occupation/activity is an inextricable part of the specific institutions of the context in which it emerges and will be shaped by the possibilities that those institutions present.

Pierre Bourdieu (1972/1977), from the perspective of anthropology, was also critical of dualisms that viewed the world either by its objective structures or through subjective experience, proposing the important concept of habitus. Bourdieu described how through engagement in activities, that is a process of embodiment, individuals acquire schemata of perception, thought and action, which is habitus. These embodied cognitive, corporeal and emotional dimensions, predispose the individual to particular ways of action and thought (Bourdieu, 1972/1977; Swartz, 2002). Bourdieu particularly linked habitus to the embodiment of socio-cultural structures, and how by providing an orientation for acting in situations with which people are familiar, tends to reinforce class structures (Cutchin, Aldrich, Bailliard, & Coppola, 2008).

These theories provided initial theoretical underpinnings for this study, supporting the essential inter-relationship between individual, occupation and social structure without appointing causal effect to any one element. They indicated the need for exploration of social structures through time and their influence on occupation, but also the impact of doing on the embodied individual. However, I was reluctant to structure the study closely around a particular theoretical framework as I was aware that these theories were developed in Western Europe (although Bourdieu based much of his theories on fieldwork in North Africa), and Greece presented a considerably different context. Additionally they emerged in disciplines other than occupational science and had not been developed specifically to explore occupation. They provided therefore 'sensitising concepts' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007) for the preparation and early stages of the study.

As the study progressed and particularly during the process of data analysis a transactional perspective as developed by John Dewey (Dewey & Bentley, 1949), and as discussed within the occupational science literature by Cutchin and Dickie (Cutchin, 2004; Cutchin & Dickie, 2013; Dickie et al., 2006) was found to be a useful theoretical framework for exploring the findings. Dewey's theory extended the ideas of structuration theory with the concept of transaction, while his discussion of habits was consistent with the discussion of habitus by Bourdieu (Cutchin et al., 2008). The importance of Dewey's work to the discussion of the findings of this study, leads to a need to introduce key arguments from his work here.

### **The transactional perspective of John Dewey.**

John Dewey (1859-1952) was an American philosopher and leading exponent of pragmatism in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Writing considerably before either Bourdieu or Giddens, he primarily problematised all dualisms, including material and spiritual, physical and mental, subjective and objective, but particularly inner and outer. While Giddens discussed the structuration of social systems, Dewey talked of trans-actions and what has been referred to as a "world without within" (Tiles, 1995, p. 137). He criticised the 'spectator view' of reality, rather suggesting a 'participant's view' where people and their doings were part of the whole, and where the whole included all aspects of the total situation through time and space (Garrison, 2001, p. 276).



Importantly, the idea of the situation brings into the exploration of occupation all elements of individual and context as part of one whole, and without hierarchy, fixed order or pre-assigned value as to their relative importance.

Such a concept of a whole necessarily entails an understanding of the contingency of the elements of the situation, and Dewey (1958) also noted the ever changing nature of all elements. This is both the ongoing change, both slow and rapid, that could be described as 'natural' – from the slowly changing course of a river caused by ongoing erosion, to the growth of the child – but also sudden and unexpected change. As he noted “the world is a scene of risk; it is uncertain, unstable” (Dewey, 1958, p. 41), and he emphasised the importance of acknowledging the precarious, uncertain and contingent nature of existence as well as the more stable. He noted that needs emerge from the unstable and the incomplete, creating the necessity for corresponding elements to supply those needs. If everything was stable the world would just be, remaining unchanging and forever the same. As well as demonstrating the importance and positive nature of change, Dewey’s discussion of change and contingency also indicated the idea of parts being part-of-a-whole (Dewey, 1958), one part necessitated by the other. These ongoing changes become the requirement for occupation, as the problematic or unsatisfactory demands change into the satisfactory, into order, through the use of actions and tools, “...and the issue of living depends upon the art with which these things are adjusted to each other” (Dewey, 1958, p. 76). Occupation becomes the means for the ongoing coordination of the contingent and changing elements of the whole.

As discussed, change is an ongoing part of all elements of the situation. As previously mentioned, Dewey rejected all dualisms and he used the term ‘the situation’ to describe not the context *in* which people acted as the term is frequently used, but to include everything that is part of the event (whatever that may be), incorporating context and individual, and extending temporally and spatially (Dewey & Bentley, 1949). When applied to an exploration of occupation this understanding of the situation entails consideration of all aspects of the environment, the climate, the social, cultural, and economic, the people, all both currently and historically, without offering priority to any particular element.

Regarding behaviour, Dewey defined it as “organic-environmental events” (Dewey & Bentley, 1949, p. 125), and consistent with his discussion of the whole and of transaction rather than interaction, specifically clarified that the individual was not the locus of the behaviour acting on an external, detachable environment. He noted that although at certain moments it may appear that the individual is actor, for example when a hunter goes to shoot a rabbit, a more complete investigation of the whole situation through time will reveal a transactional process by which, for example, rabbit and man came to know each other and to be named and understood as hunter and prey (Dewey & Bentley, 1949). Importantly for the investigation of occupation, Dewey noted that only through observation of an event as a whole can it be known. For example, a shopper requires a shop keeper and a shop, as a minimum in order for shopping to be understood, and he cautioned of the limited knowledge that the naming of such abstract behaviours as ‘shopping’ can bring. While it is possible to describe separate elements of any event, in order to understand it in its totality it is necessary to take a transactional perspective (Dewey & Bentley, 1949). As will be discussed in the next section, he perceived much of ongoing occupation as habitual, based on knowledge and experience of the elements of the situation. However, at other times more extensive change is required leading to opportunities for creativity and innovation.

Dewey’s work has been introduced only recently to occupational scientists focusing particularly on his transactional theory (Cutchin, 2004; Dickie et al., 2006). The increasing number of related publications would appear to indicate its usefulness in expanding understandings of occupation (Aldrich, 2008; Cutchin et al., 2008; Cutchin & Dickie, 2013; Frank, 2011; Kirby, 2013; Kuo, 2011). In particular, the shift away from the individualism that characterises the existing conceptualisation of occupation to the idea of the transactional whole seems to be particularly useful.

Dewey’s theory of the transactional nature of the world facilitates understanding of occupation as an important transactional phenomenon that coordinates or harmonises the ever changing elements of the situation. However, this is not a process without direction, or an automatic response to changing events. Dewey, like Giddens and Bourdieu, discussed the nature of the agency of the individual and the direction of activity or the purpose of occupation, and these issues will be discussed in the following section.

## **Exploring Action**

This section discusses a number of related aspects of action. Firstly, the agency of the individual will be considered and the nature of purposeful action. In continuation, the shared understandings of action will be explored, and finally the direction of action, the value attached to action and what can be understood about the direction that action takes. The term action is used here to be consistent with the original theories which are understood to relate to occupation as a type of action.

### **Agency and purposeful action.**

Dewey saw action as predominantly habitual, operating subconsciously to support the coordination of the elements of the situation (Cutchin et al., 2008; Dewey, 1922/2007). He described habits in a similar way to Bourdieu's description of habitus, that is, as habitual predispositions to act rather than as reflex responses. A disposition to act was therefore not a simple physical response, but a disposition to all the complexities of doing, and incorporated behaviours, desires, attitudes and morals.

Both Bourdieu and Dewey described habits as forming through the conditions, social structures and culture with which the individual was developing. Habits are therefore as much of the environment as they are of the individual (Aldrich, 2008; Bourdieu, 1972/1977; Dewey, 1922/2007). Habits do not 'belong' to the individual, but are 'of' the individual and their world together; they are formed as the individual engages with the world, and specifically the world with which he or she moves and interacts directly (Brinkmann, 2011; Dewey, 1922/2007). We "know how" to do what we do by means of our habits (Dewey, 1922/2007, p. 177).

However, habits are not prescriptive rules of action but are responsive to the continually changing nature of the situation. The changing and contingent nature of the situation requires a creative re-organisation of habits, requiring imagination to see new possibilities and an intelligent use of past experiences combined in new ways in order to achieve the best possible outcome (Cutchin et al., 2008; Dewey, 1922/2007). What is considered a best possible outcome, that is, what people are working towards, will be discussed in a later section.

However, to continue this discussion of agency, both a transactional perspective and structuration theory therefore place the action of the individual within an ongoing context of which the individual is a small and temporary part, and from which much of his or her occupation emerges habitually. As has been discussed it therefore becomes difficult to discuss the individual as the cause of occupation, although this does not mean that the person does not have reasons for what they do (Giddens, 1984). Occupation is always either tacitly recognised or able to be verbally explained, excused or celebrated to oneself and to or by others. Occupation is therefore part of a known and comprehensible world, shared by many, if not all, of the people within the situation. If much of everyday occupation is understood to be habitual, developing within the situation as a whole (including a number of people), there begins to emerge an understanding of how shared understandings of occupation may emerge.

### **Shared understandings of action.**

That certain groups of people are understood to share particular understandings of the world is evident in discussions of the world view, of culture, of language and of narrative. Here we are particularly interested in shared understandings around action or occupation, and in establishing whether it is reasonable to discuss common understandings of occupation amongst groups of people. If this is the case it is then possible to explore the direction of occupation that these groups of people seem to take, which introduces consideration of choice, ethics and what is a good or usual life as understood within a group of people.

In philosophy Husserl and Gadamer discussed in slightly different ways the idea of background knowledge. Husserl discussed the concept of the 'life-world', the world of our experience and in which we live (Russell, 2006). Gadamer discussed how we are always within and of the situation we are trying to understand and therefore there is a 'horizon' to how far we can see or understand from that particular position (Gadamer, 1975/2004). The metaphor of texture has been used for this background knowledge; "a tightly woven fabric of interlaced and transversing understandings" (Polkinghorne, 2000, p. 461). It is proposed that we understand what exists within this sense making background as we feel, rather than cognitively understand, our way through our daily occupation.

Dewey, Giddens and Bourdieu all discussed how much of daily occupation takes place at a tacit level of practical knowledge, recognised and recognisable within the shared social conditions of action. Giddens (1984, p. 4) commented that most mutual knowledge is practical in character: “inherent in the capability to ‘go on’ within the routines of social life”, is conventional for the group and therefore does not usually enter discourse. Practical knowledge is shared knowledge and the discussion of Bourdieu and Dewey of habitual knowledge that emerges in shared contexts, supports this idea.

Theories of culture are also of course based on the idea of a shared world, or as Geertz (1973) described it, shared webs of meaning. Membership in a culture is therefore important to the commonly held knowledge around daily activity: “the sharing with others of conceptions about what can be taken as ordinary in the round of living” (Bruner, 2008, p. 35). This is an often implicit understanding of how things are and how they should be (Bruner, 1990).

Therefore, there appears to be considerable theoretical support for the idea of a practical shared knowledge and that this is predominantly pre-discursive knowledge. Theories of narrative further explore the idea of shared meanings and implicit understandings. Bruner (1986) discussed a narrative mode of cognitive functioning as a different type of thinking from the paradigmatic mode of logical, scientific thinking, and how it is narrative cognition that is directed towards understanding action (Polkinghorne, 1995). It is narrative processes that enable understanding of our own and other’s actions as parts of comprehensible wholes, assigning significance to individual actions according to their effect on the whole, rather than according to the cause and effect laws of causal processes found in scientific reasoning (Polkinghorne, 1988).

The French philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1984) also discussed links between narrative and everyday life. He described in the process of mimesis how stories emerge from the doing of everyday life. Describing a three-fold process, he proposed that it is from the narrative traits of daily activity, which he described as *mimesis<sub>1</sub>*, that plots may be developed (*mimesis<sub>2</sub>*) which enter into communication when told to a listener as a story (*mimesis<sub>3</sub>*). The first fold, *mimesis<sub>1</sub>*, is important to this discussion as it places the

practical and tacit understanding of occupation as part of a pre-narrative structure of experience.

This pre-narrative structure of daily activity includes structural, symbolic and temporal forms (Ricoeur, 1984; Vandeveld, 2008). Regarding the structural form, Ricoeur (1984, p. 55) stated it is the conceptual network that will link the answers to the questions “‘what’, ‘why’, ‘who’, ‘how’, ‘with whom’ or ‘against whom’ in regard to any action”, and mastering this conceptual network is to have practical understanding. The temporal form refers to how present action orders the present future (the expected), the present past (the memory) with the present. The symbolic form provides the means to interpret action and thereby also a means to evaluate actions, making some actions better than others, more worth doing than others (Ricoeur, 1984). Ricoeur (1991) described how it is through our practical reasoning that we understand the reasons with which actions are done. This is not the retrospective and interpretive verbal explanation of prior actions, but the ongoing reason for actions, one after the other, that link them together as we do them.

Narrative theory and the theory of mimesis (Bruner, 1986; Polkinghorne, 1988; Ricoeur, 1984) support the idea of tacit, sense-making processes that are an important part of daily occupation. This sense-making is to do with shared meaning, an understanding of what occupation is about and for, and this requires us to further consider values and ethics as part of occupation.

### **Action, values and ethics.**

Ricoeur (1984) discussed how action is always symbolically mediated, has a meaning which is incorporated in the action and which can be understood by other people. Furthermore, because of the norms of the culture, actions can be given a relative value “which says that this action is more valuable than that one” (Ricoeur, 1984, p. 58). However slight the action, each action can be assigned a value towards good or bad, better or worse, and he emphasised that no action is ever ethically neutral. This places ethics as intrinsic to everyday speech and action and grounded in agreement and practice (Lambeck, 2010). If daily occupation takes place within a framework of ethical choices, and following Dewey’s understanding of the transactional relationship between

all elements of the situation within which habits are developed (Dewey, 1922/2007), it is reasonable to assert that under normal circumstances the community or group is working broadly within a tacit framework of what is commonly perceived to be usual or right for them. This raises questions as to what is the form of what is usual and right.

Dewey discussed the harmony between all elements of the situation as an ideal for living. However, he also proposed that the ongoing direction of action should be towards the realisation of the possibilities of the individual and the flourishing of socio-political life, that is, of the community. He emphasised the responsibility that each person has towards this end, both within his or her own lifetime, but also in passing onto the next generation the conditions within which they too may flourish (Cutchin & Dickie, 2012a; Dewey, 1922/2007). Such locating of ethics in practice and in action was characteristic of Aristotle's concept of eudemonia, expressed in the idea of an ongoing process of a flourishing life (Lambeck, 2010; Rasmussen, 1999). Ethical activities such as the giving and receiving of gifts and services, nurturing, and keeping one's word, are aspects of this lived and ongoing process of ethical living (Lambeck, 2010).

That daily life is inherently ethical introduces the complexity and contradictory nature of occupation. Different forms of occupation are awarded different values and virtues which may be articulated hierarchically. However, ongoing daily life is a juxtaposition of conflicting demands and the individual must engage in an ongoing process of managing these. Aristotle described this process when he discussed that the meta-virtue is to find the right balance both in specific circumstances but also in life overall (Lambeck, 2010).

The ideas of flourishing, balance and harmony have also been linked to notions of health. The concept of health essentially underpins any discussion of occupation, given that occupational therapy emerged from an understanding that certain ways of living one's life would support health. Although occupational therapy became associated closely with the biomedical sciences, illness and disease, with a dualism of the individual and occupation, there are attempts to (re)locate occupation more closely with expanded understandings of health (Wilcock, 1993, 2006, 2007).

This section has explored the notion of shared and largely tacit understandings of everyday life and how these incorporate ideas of what is worth doing. Occupation works relationally to support these tacit ideas of what is worth doing, and which in theories of occupation are also linked to broad conceptualisations of health. The tendency to place health in a linear relationship to illness and disease leads to a final section which will develop an expanded view of health that will underpin this study.

## **Health and Everyday Life**

Medical science continues to largely dominate discussions of health (Bury, 2005). Frequently, health is viewed as a normative state from which illness causes deviation and is discussed within the boundaries of pathology (Alter, 1999b; Ogden, 2002). Alongside this medical domination, understandings of health have been influenced not only by Cartesian dualisms that imposed a sharp ontological distinction between mental and physical domains (Alter, 1999b), but also by a focus on the individual as the location and cause of ill-health (Ogden, 2002).

Particularly important to this study are those approaches that explore health not only from the notion of health of the World Health Organisation (WHO), (1946) that expanded from a focus on illness and disease to include well-being, but those that approach health from the position of human flourishing, the promotion of capabilities, and within occupational science from the position of health promotion through occupation and occupational justice.

That health is not only, or even primarily, a case of individual genetics and body functioning and that there are fundamental requirements for health in terms of societal and environmental conditions is now well established. In a series of documents emerging from international conferences aimed at health promotion, the WHO has named the conditions that they consider to be fundamental for health. From the publication of the Ottawa Charter (WHO, 1986) to the 7<sup>th</sup> Global Conference in Nairobi (WHO, 2009), the WHO has made a sustained effort to support health through the identification of pre-requisites such as peace, sustainable resources and a stable eco-



system, as well as shelter, education, food and income together with social justice and equity. That health is intricately linked to the social conditions of our daily lives was clearly outlined in the WHO report of the Commission on the Social Determinants of Health (2008). Although these refer primarily to the social determinants of disease and premature mortality (Venkatapuram, 2011), an understanding of health beyond an absence of disease and illness is evident in WHO documents, such as the Ottawa Charter (WHO, 1986, p. 1) that refers to health as a “resource for everyday living”. The recognition that health includes the ability to satisfy needs, achieve aspirations and adapt to the environment, not only of the individual but also of groups, is reflected in the increasing body of work with an expanded view of health that looks at the conditions of possibility for human development and flourishing, as will now be discussed.

It is significant that this work is being advanced not from within the discipline of medicine but from within economics and development. For the past 20 years understandings of development have moved beyond an economic foundation to recognise that people are the “real wealth of a nation” with the basic objective of development to “enable people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives” (United Nations Development Programme, 1990, p. 9). Early work in this area, that took place in South America, is that of Max-Neef (1991) who developed the theoretical concept of Human Scale Development with a strong focus on human needs and local development. As an economist he recognised the convergence of politics, economics and health, and that the conditions for human development include the satisfaction of fundamental human needs, increasing self-reliance (as opposed to international domination) and organic connections of people with nature and technology. He was concerned with not only the individual, but also with social participation and local communities, and proposed that it was absolutely essential to open up a critical reflection on the way we live and to rediscover the components of the social fabric that support human development (Max-Neef, 1991). With his politically driven strivings for change, his work is an early example of the increasing recognition of health as a human right, evident in recent documents published by the United Nations and the WHO (Hocking, 2013; WHO, 2002, 2011).

Other important theorists in this area are Amartya Sen, another economist, and Martha Nussbaum, a philosopher, and they speak to the concept of human flourishing, the expansion of the real freedoms that people enjoy and to the importance of these for quality of life and well-being (Nussbaum, 2007, 2011; Sen, 1999). The Human Development Approach, also known as the Capability Approach, that they developed, recognises the importance of developing human capabilities and of the requirements for material and social preconditions which must support these (Nussbaum, 2007). Capabilities are recognised as those freedoms which if removed make a life not worthy of human dignity, where it is understood that all people are born with equal human dignity (Nussbaum, 2011).

Recently the work of Venkatapuram (2011) has brought together the capabilities approach, that aims to define the components of a human life that reflect equal human dignity, with theories of health, in order to develop a theory of health justice. Within this theory he defines health as a meta-capability to achieve a cluster of basic capabilities (which he names as Nussbaum's ten central human capabilities<sup>2</sup>) to be and to do things that "reflect a life worthy of equal human dignity" (Venkatapuram, 2011, p. 71).

Emerging is a concept of health considerably more complex than that of a normative concept from which illness and disease deviate. Health is not an end product but is the process that permits people to do and to be, a notion of unlimited and unbounded potential (Alter, 1999b). This also moves away from a subjective evaluation of well-being that may well be influenced by the conditions of possibility with which the individual is living (Venkatapuram, 2011). The particular capabilities that may be required can be defined in various ways, but both the needs described by Max-Neef (1991) and the capabilities identified by Nussbaum (2011), include not only those related to survival (life, bodily health and bodily integrity are named capabilities, subsistence and protection are named needs), but also discuss the importance of

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<sup>2</sup> The ten central capabilities named by Nussbaum (2011) are: life; bodily health; bodily integrity; senses, imagination, and thought; emotions; practical reason; affiliation; other species; play; and control over one's environment.

relationships, reason, understanding, creation, imagination and play, together with the importance of freedom and dignity. In this understanding of health as an overarching capability to do and to be, a strong compatibility with understandings of occupation is evident.

A central element in this expanded understanding of human flourishing is the importance of the environment. The importance of the social to health has been thoroughly explored in theories of social capital, where extensive social networks are understood to provide access to a wide range of social and practical resources fundamental to health (Putnam, 2001). The impact of social inequality on health has also been investigated, and the importance of psychosocial determinants such as agency, control, dignity, and stress identified (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). However, not only the social aspects but the environment as a whole is seen as an integral part of the possibility for development and growth. Such contingency of person and context is reflected in the work of health ecologists who see that “everything connects to everything” (Daysh, 1999, p. xvi) and describe the inter-relationship, interdependence and interplay of health and environment (Honari, 1999). Venkatapuram (2011) proposes that a unified theory of health must include not only nature/biology, but also the social conditions, the environmental conditions and individual behaviour and agency.

Understandings of health are undergoing considerable revision and development at the present time, both in the increasing emphasis on health as a human right by the WHO (2002, 2011) and in the conceptualisation of health as a meta-capability to do and be things that reflect a life of dignity, influenced not only by biological and individual lifestyle factors but also by social and environmental factors (Venkatapuram, 2011). Consideration must now be given to how these notions of health relate to understandings of health and occupation within occupational therapy and occupational science.

Occupational therapy was founded on the belief in a link between occupation and health (Wilcock, 1993, 2006), and the naming of the profession was based on such observations (Law, Steinwender, & Leclair, 1998). The first section of this chapter discussed how the core characteristics of occupation described in the English language

literature demonstrate features of what was considered to be a usual and healthy way to live in the society in which the concept emerged and developed.

This underpinning understanding of the link between health and the occupations of everyday life was overshadowed for some years in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by a medical understanding of health and the close alliance of occupational therapy with the 'health' services. More recently, Ann Wilcock has been the leading scholar in not only revisiting the original understandings of health but in developing these, emphasising the place of occupation as central to health (Wilcock, 1993, 1998, 2006) and suggesting that natural health and occupation may be one and the same (Wilcock, 2007). She identified occupation as a biological need that emerged with and through evolution, and occupational needs as human's primary health mechanisms, not only ensuring basic survival, but also enabling people to use and develop their capacities and potential, to experience satisfaction and achievement and to thereby flourish (Wilcock, 1993, 2006). In this way she confirmed occupation as more than simple doing or activity, but rather a combination of doing, being, becoming and belonging that is essential for survival and health (Wilcock, 2007). A major study in the USA that explored the effects of occupation on health and well-being, the Well-Elderly Study, supported the importance of occupation that maintained and even developed capacities, providing opportunities for adventure, challenge, social bonding, and travel (Clark, 1997), and has been recently replicated and extended (Clark et al., 2011).

In both Wilcock's work and the Well-Elderly Study, demonstrating the importance of occupation for enabling people to not only survive but also to develop their capacities, there would appear to be an overlap with the capability approach of Nussbaum (2011) as introduced to understandings of health by Venkatapuram (2011). Occupation here is linked to a positive and dynamic view of health, situated in everyday life and focusing on people's potential not only as individuals but as communities and populations.

As with understandings of health, occupational scientists have also increasingly recognised the importance of environmental factors (both social and physical) in determining people's possibilities to participate and engage in occupation (Kronenberg, Pollard, & Sakellariou, 2011; Kronenberg, Simo Algado, & Pollard, 2005; Laliberte Rudman, 2010; Pollard, Sakellariou, & Kronenberg, 2008; Watson & Swartz, 2004).

Occupation, like health, has been described as a right (Hammell, 2008; World Federation of Occupational Therapists, 2006), and a critical perspective on the impact of environmental factors, particularly social, led to the development of the concept of occupational justice (Wilcock & Townsend, 2000). Linked to notions of social justice, occupational justice recognises that humans are occupational beings and their right to participate in occupation that enables them to flourish and develop their potential (Stadnyk et al., 2011). Occupational injustice occurs when the structural and contextual factors do not enable participation, choice, balance and meaning in occupation, resulting in occupational deprivation (Whiteford, 2011), occupational alienation, occupational marginalisation and occupational imbalance (Stadnyk et al., 2011; Wilcock, 2006). It can be seen that occupation is understood to be both the expression of health but also a key element of maintaining and promoting health. While health may be discussed in abstract terms, it is realised, promoted and maintained in the ongoing everyday doing of people's lives.

In completing this brief review of understandings of health, a final perspective is from research that has explored how people understand health within their daily lives. An early and influential study was that of Herzlich (2004) in the 1960s in a Parisian suburb. Here people linked health not only with illness and but also with their way of life; where city life in particular was seen to not only exacerbate illness but also potentially to cause it. The experienced constraints of city life, including having no choice in the work one did and having to conform to time schedules, were major concerns, and reflect the importance of choice and control identified in studies of occupation and health (Law et al., 1998). In addition, people expressed the wish to be able to live in a more balanced manner, and this concern with balance, equilibrium and harmony has been found in a number of studies of people's health beliefs (Blaxter, 2004; Bury, 2005). The complexity and multidimensionality of people's understandings of health was evident in these and later studies (e.g. Blaxter, 2004), where frequently noted was not only the absence of illness, but also vitality and good physical functioning, good social relationships, functioning (being able to do things), and mental well-being. A number of these studies also revealed the importance of social determinants to experiences of health as non-manual workers from higher social classes focused more on feelings of well-being, life without constraints, being in control and personal unfolding, while manual workers more on being able to work and avoiding excess

(D'Houtard & Field, 1986, cited Blaxter, 2004, p. 50; Freund, McGuire, & Podhurst, 2003). People understood health along multiple dimensions and adapted these understandings to changing circumstances and contexts. Therefore, it appears that people incorporate their health beliefs into their way of life over time (Bury, 2005), with health being understood, experienced and worked on within the context of their daily lives.

Finally in concluding it is illustrative of the discussion of an expanded view of health, that the contemporary Greek word for health is *ugeía* originating in the name of the Goddess Hygeia, and that there is no corresponding word with the same root for ill-health as there is in English (i.e. health/ill-health). Ygeia represented the idea that humans could remain healthy if they lived rationally, according to reason and health was defined holistically and related to the way of living, exercise, the environment and food (Saylor, 2004; Wilcock, 2006).

Several important ideas are emerging that will underpin understandings of health and occupation in this study. An overarching theme is that health and everyday living are connected; people, their specific contexts and what they do, can be seen, using Dewey's terminology (1949), to be in a transactional relationship that is fundamental to health. Regarding health itself, this is not a static and stable normative concept but is unbounded and potentially ever extending. It incorporates notions of peoples flourishing, the ongoing satisfaction of needs and the development of their potentials, but these relate to the context both in regards to the possibilities and restraints on people's activities but also in that health incorporates notions of harmony, equilibrium and balance with the environment as a whole. Finally, and linking with the idea of a tacit knowledge that supports the usual, is the notion that people work at their health and that it is understood and experienced throughout day to day living.

## **Drawing Conclusions**

This exploration of the theoretical literature indicates that occupation is a concept that expresses a particular way of doing everyday life. As such, the way that groups of

people understand daily life, what they value, believe and so want to do and to be, is specific and relevant to each context. At this time the majority of the theoretical discussions regarding the concept of occupation are based in the English speaking Western world, with a predominant focus on an active agent and limited, though developing discussions of contextual and particularly societal influences.

The social activity theories of structuration (Giddens, 1984) and of habitus (Bourdieu, 1972/1977) support theoretically the importance of understanding occupation as emerging from within an ongoing interrelationship between societal structures and the individual, avoiding the dualism of agency and structure. This enables a shift in focus away from the individual in order to also explore the interrelated spatial, temporal and social elements within which occupation emerges. Dewey (Dewey & Bentley, 1949) theorised that these elements are so intimately interconnected as to refer to them as transactionally related, part of one whole, and this idea became an important part of the interpretation of the data and the development of the findings that will be presented later.

Occupation, understood as a particular way of living everyday life, is not the individualised activity of one person but the shared way of living of groups and communities. While individuals may do occupation alone and with individual variation, the form that occupation takes, the who does what, why, where and when, and what is perceived to be important to preserve, maintain and develop, is a shared knowledge and understanding. This is a largely tacit knowledge, a practical knowledge that enables people to go on with their everyday lives and to make sense of their own and others everyday doings. Ricoeur's (1991) theory of mimesis and particularly the pre-narrative structure of daily activity will be used to facilitate exploration and interpretation of this largely tacit, shared knowledge.

This study is built on the reasoning that to understand occupation is to understand this shared knowledge around how life should be lived; should, not in the sense of an ideal or good life, but in the sense of a way that is right, usual and understandable. Also, that it is in this shared understanding of everyday occupation that understandings of health are embedded. These understandings of health may be specifically related to the

prevention of disease and illness, but may also relate to wider issues of what is important to do and to be.

This study therefore emerged from this theoretical understanding of occupation as situated and contextualised, located in the relational dynamics between context and individual (Cutchin & Dickie, 2012a), and as related to shared understandings of the usual, often referred to as *h kathimerinótita* (the everyday) in Greek. This also indicates a need to focus not on particular individuals and the occupations that they do, but on occupation itself, following Dickie's (2003b, p. 28) call to "study occupation as a human enterprise". The emerging understandings both of health and of the inextricable link between occupation and health that have been discussed also indicate that this study should take place within an understanding that exploring occupation is also to explore notions of healthy living for individuals and communities. The need to undertake such a study in Greece, a country to which occupational therapy was imported and where at this time there have been no studies specifically exploring occupation, becomes evident.

This concludes this discussion of the theoretical underpinnings of this study. The following chapter discusses in detail the research design, from the underpinning ontological understandings, my position as researcher, to the specific methods, data collection, and the analytic process employed. It aims to enable the reader to consider the methodology and quality of the whole research process.



## **Chapter 3: Research Design**

Having outlined the theoretical underpinnings of the study in the preceding chapter, this chapter will outline the research design. This incorporates a number of elements including the underpinning theoretical paradigm, the research methodology, the methods of data collection used, and finally the methods of interpretation and presentation.

The research design emerged from and reflected the research questions, aiming to establish the conditions and process which would best answer the questions that I was asking. However, the research design did not lead to a rigid, linear process, rather the research process developed alongside my growing understandings within the actual context of doing the research. The design therefore can be better understood as a circular, reflexive process that operated throughout the research (Haverkamp & Young, 2007; Maxwell, 2005), or as an emergent design. Therefore this chapter will also outline some of the key elements in the process of conducting the research and how these influenced the emerging research design.

### **Aims of the Study**

This study aimed to explore the everyday activities of adults living in a small Greek town. As discussed in the preceding chapter this emerged as an area of study when I questioned the assumptions regarding occupation that underpin much of the English language literature, particularly from within occupational therapy but also from occupational science (Molineux, 2009; Yerxa, Frank et al., 1990), in relation to my professional and personal lived experiences in Greece.

I adopted the very broad definition of occupation commonly used in occupational science, as “all the things that people need, want, or have to do” (Wilcock, 2006, p.

xiv), which enabled a largely unrestricted exploration of occupation and used the word activity rather than occupation in order to maintain this broad focus. A number of specific elements were identified to guide the study and were stated as objectives. These included an exploration of the nature of activity itself, that is, what people do: how, where, when, with whom and in particular why. Important to this exploration was the idea that daily occupation for many people is part of a largely taken-for-granted, shared and rarely discussed usual daily life, or *katherimerinótita* (everydayness), and that this is influenced by the shared context with which people live. Therefore a second objective was to explore the context, including the social, spatial and temporal aspects, and its influence on the emergence and nature of activity. Occupational therapy was established on the understanding that occupation was linked to health and this understanding continues to be an important part of the conceptualisation of occupation, and perhaps that which ultimately differentiates occupation from activity. I therefore considered this to be an important area of focus and a third objective was to explore activities and characteristics of activities in relation to their perceived links to health.

I considered that these objectives focusing on the nature of activity itself, the context within which it took place and the perceptions and understandings regarding health and activity, would enable me to develop a rich understanding of the concept of occupation as lived in the Greek town. This understanding would enable me to discuss how this conceptualisation of occupation relates to current understandings of occupation as discussed in the literature, which was the fourth objective of this study.

## **Positioning Myself**

It is important that at this early stage in the discussion of the research design that I establish my own position, as from the outset the choice of research area and questions reflected who I am, both personally and professionally. I also recognise my active role in the co-construction of understanding throughout the study (Guba & Lincoln, 2005), and therefore reflexivity regarding my position in relation to the participants and the research process as a whole, was an ongoing process (Davies, 2008).

As a researcher my social location (Morrow, 2007) is that I am female, born in the UK where I was educated as an occupational therapist. Having lived as a child both in Ireland and England, as a young adult I moved to Greece where I have now lived for almost 30 years, over half my life, in Athens as a Greek citizen, married to a Greek, with two bi-cultural and bi-lingual children. I have worked as a clinician and an educator in both the UK and Greece. I bring to the study my professional but also personal experiences of participation in, understanding and questioning of both British and Greek everyday activities. I bring my lived experience of the influence of context on my everyday occupation, and the flexible sense of identity that comes with being a different person with different people and contexts. I also have experienced having my values, opinions and beliefs challenged as I move between people and places with alternative understandings and world views. I therefore understand my (and others') lived experiences to be part of a relative, constructed reality, with everyday activity emerging from within an intricate inter-relationship between the individual and their context.

Professionally, through this study I also wished to contribute to the discussion, which emerged early this century (Iwama, 2003, 2006), that challenged the idea that occupation is a universal concept. When exploring Western theories with students of occupational therapy in Greece, discussions developed regarding the relevance of certain concepts to Greek daily activity, and in some cases we experienced discordance between the concepts as expressed in English and as we understood them in Greek.

I wished to support these alternative understandings of daily life that I was experiencing in my own life in Greece, and to facilitate these ways of being and doing to be heard. I believed that this would contribute to the development of occupational science and occupational therapy not only in Greece but in other non-Western countries.

The position of the researcher in qualitative studies, including one's position on a 'scale' (Davies, 2008) between observer and participant and the notion of insider and outsider, has been extensively debated in the literature. Increasingly there is an understanding that each research situation and the relationships that develop are unique (e.g. Kondo, 1990; Panourgia, 1995; Wikan, 1996), and of the importance of the reflexivity of the researcher both during the research but also within the presentation of

the findings (Davies, 2008; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). The preparation for, but particularly the process of, data collection, that is, of living in the town as researcher, involved intense reflection on my position in relation to the towns' inhabitants and the study itself. I examined my place in the research and the reasons I had for undertaking this study, at this particular time and at this particular place. I explored "the connection that is always there between the researcher's positioning in society and history and the kind of research agenda and understanding such personal background shapes" (Motzafi-Haller, 1997, p. 216). I particularly reflected on my position on the borders, borders between cultures, between roles, between places, and how this might allow me to see a slightly widened horizon (to use Gadamer's term) and so a place where horizons could come to be fused (Gadamer, 1975/2004), and thereby develop new understandings of occupation. I actively worked to bring to the forefront my existing knowledge, understandings and beliefs, to examine them and to reflect on them as they coloured my observations, my conversations and my understandings. I asked people if they shared what I understood or believed and many times I was corrected or misunderstood. Such misunderstandings or miscommunications could be issues of language (not only between Greek and English, but also between academic and everyday language) and / or of life experiences, and so led to further reflection and discussions. I came to understand as a lived experience, rather than a theoretical position, the nature of constructing knowledge and understanding, and that by embracing that process understanding that is reflexive of both the personal and the theoretical may develop (Motzafi-Haller, 1997).

My position was also influenced by my identity in the research process, which was not only a personal affair, an object of my reflection, but was also constructed with those with whom I came in contact (Kondo, 1990). My own sense of being on the borders appeared in my relationships with the people of the town. My knowledge of the Greek language, my Greek family and my employment in one of the country's educational institutions, placed me as someone who had a commitment to the country. That we had a holiday home near the town was a significant element in my relationship with the town. Most people would introduce me by 'she has a house at...' and many people would want to know whose barn it was that we had bought and converted – placing us physically and socially within the network of the familiar. However, I was always *kséni* (foreign), although that was often tempered by "*allá eínai dikí mas*" (but she is ours), a

statement which demonstrated mutual affectionate recognition, but also which made me feel like some sort of exotic pet. When identity is perceived not as static but as dynamic, situated and socially constructed (Phelan & Kinsella, 2009), then, as I experienced, the researcher does not bring one identity to the research process but multiple, and the significance of each alters according to the various relationships that develop within the research process. As in any relationship there were similarities and differences, and therefore I would not place myself as either an insider or an outsider, a participant or an observer, as dichotomies introduce a rigidity to what was much more a process of being 'with' the participants (Corbin-Dwyer & Buckle, 2009), in multiple and varied ways.

Having outlined key elements regarding my position within the study, it is now possible to explore further the research design. My questions around occupation, my understanding of reality as situated and dynamic and my interest to explore daily life in all its complexities, led to situating the study within qualitative research.

## **Qualitative Research**

Exploring everyday life, the what, how, with whom, when and why of what people do, with all the essential contradictions and tensions that such an exploration must entail, led to me entering the field of qualitative research that acknowledges and respects diversity, the situatedness of knowledge and issues of power (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005b). As a qualitative researcher wishing to explore peoples' daily occupation I understood it to be important to enter the setting in which those everyday experiences took place, so that I could explore and understand their experience as it was lived (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005a; Polkinghorne, 1995). My understanding that occupation was influenced by people's particular world view as this emerged in a particular time and place, influenced by various structures and institutions, fitted within qualitative research in the post modern era. Knowledge is no longer only understood in terms of meta-narratives and abstract scientific logic, but as local and situated narratives (Lyotard, 1979), and experience is understood to be individual, complex and multi-faceted (Morrow, 2007).

A number of paradigms may be employed to frame qualitative research. This study was framed in the interpretivist-constructivist paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Grounded in relativist ontology it was understood that there are multiple, equally valid, social realities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005a; Morrow, 2007), which led me to the epistemological position that the study was primarily subjective, led by my own experience of the world, and that findings would be a co-construction between myself and the participants (Haverkamp & Young, 2007b). I also incorporated ideas from a critical theory perspective, particularly regarding the reality of power and how social and ideological structures shape or influence action and the meaning of action (Lynam, Browne, Kirkham, & Anderson, 2007; Morrow, 2007).

### **Theoretical underpinnings of the study.**

As I discussed in the preceding chapter, initial sensitising theoretical concepts that contributed to the development of the research design and strategy were theories of social activity and specifically Giddens' (1984) structuration theory and Bourdieu's (1972/ 1977) theory of habitus. Their work influenced and supported my ideas around the mutual influence of individual and societal structures on occupation, and that for each of us our sense of what constitutes a usual daily life is part of a largely unconscious backdrop, taken for granted and rarely questioned.

As the study developed and with the process of data analysis, an understanding of occupation as being fluidly integrated into the cohesive whole of which it was an inextricable part, found resonance with Dewey's theories of the trans-actional, rather than the inter-actional relationship, of all the elements within the situation as a totality (Dewey & Bentley, 1949). This theory therefore was used to underpin the emerging understanding of the nature of the relationship between person and context and the place and nature of occupation within that relationship.

The importance of understanding occupation in the town as part of the whole situation was reflected in the process of analysis that developed. Narrative as a form of cognition that focuses on the whole (Bruner, 1986), together with Ricoeur's (1984) understanding of daily activity as having a pre-narrative form, led the way to thinking about daily life in the town as an ongoing story within which people's actions were

comprehensible and had meaning. Ricoeur's theory of mimesis guided the process of analysis from the pre-narrative character of everyday action through the process of emplotment to the development of possible plots that synthesised the multiple and diverse elements (Ricoeur, 1984). The findings of this study are presented as a narrative of occupation in the town, with a particular form of action (occupation), characters, setting and plots.

## **Research Methodology**

This section presents the research methodology and includes sections that discuss: the selection of the methodology, the selection of the setting where the study was situated, the research methods and finally the methods of data recording.

### **Selecting the methodology.**

The questions put forward in this study and the theoretical underpinnings of the study, indicated the necessity for a methodology that could be carried out in everyday settings, would be sensitive to how people feel and act while also acknowledging the context in which the experience was located (O'Reilly, 2012). Situating the research in a particular geographical location, rather than focusing specifically on a particular number of individuals, also would enable the exploration of the social conditions of possibility (Wacquant, 2004) within which occupation was taking place, and of the shared meanings and understandings, the tacit knowledge, of what was a usual everyday life. Ethnography therefore became the strategy of choice, as it traditionally focuses on social life, understood as and explored through "the outcome of the interaction of structure and agency through the practice of everyday life" (O'Reilly, 2012, p. 3). That ethnographic research is iterative-inductive (O'Reilly, 2012) was also particularly important in this study, where, although I had framed my aim and objectives for exploration I was extremely aware of the need to be cautious of imposing Western English language theories, philosophies and histories on this Southern European non-English speaking setting.

Ethnography was originally associated with anthropology and the study of the culture of far off and exotic people, while during the 20<sup>th</sup> century sociology came to employ ethnography for the study of communities and urban groups in the United States and Europe. More recently ethnography has been a widely used strategy amongst a number of disciplines and used in a variety of ways (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; O'Reilly, 2012). Issues of power, the importance of language, and the influence of wider contexts and problems on the local, have been incorporated in contemporary ethnography (Frank & Polkinghorne, 2010).

Ethnography, in a variety of forms, has been used in a number of studies to explore various aspects of occupation, particularly since the emergence of the discipline of occupational science in the late 1980s and the need to employ research methodologies that would facilitate the exploration of everyday activity in natural settings (Carlson & Clark, 1991). Some of these studies used interviews and participant observation, while, consistent with the individual focus of occupational therapy and occupational science, they primarily focused on individuals with specific characteristics (e.g. autism) and had a limited number of North American participants (e.g. Blanche, 1996; Lawlor & Mattingly, 2001; Spitzer, 2003). Other related methodologies have also been employed, and specifically, institutional ethnographies (Krusen, 2011; Townsend, 1996; Townsend, Langille, & Ripley, 2003; Townsend, Sheffield, Stadnyk, & Beagan, 2006) and auto-ethnographies (Denshire, 2006; Hoppes, 2005; Warne & Hoppes, 2009). More recently there has been a number of studies published focusing on a particular type of occupation. Some of these focus particularly on individuals and their experience, with participant observation providing supporting information, for example Bratun and Asaba's (2008) study of Qi Gong participation, Ramugondon's (2012) study of inter-generational play, and Hanes, Smith and Baxter's (2010) study of skateboarding. In other studies ongoing participatory observation over time was supported by informal conversations, for example, Dickie's (2003b) study of quilt making.

These studies, with their focus on individuals and their experiences, often located in a single setting (e.g. a classroom or day centre), or a particular bounded occupation (e.g. skateboarding), were framed within Western understandings of occupation as discrete chunks of activity, authored by individuals. While many provided discussion of the



interplay between contextual and individual factors, none provided critique of occupation itself, which was a driver for this study.

Only a small number of ethnographic studies have focused on the conceptual underpinnings of occupation itself, most in settings other than Western and English speaking, and have provided some critique for current understandings of occupation. Asaba's (2008) study of Hashi-ire explored the opportunities it offers for experiences of interdependence in a Japanese setting, concluding with a suggestion that understanding occupations as a way to relate has not been sufficiently explored. Kumar (2010) explored the emergence of culture through the doing of bharatangtyam, a South Indian classical dance and argued for culture as a form of occupation.

Of particular relevance to this study are the few studies which have demonstrated the impact of the wider context on occupation. Krishnagiri (1996) explored the impact of culture on mate selection, while Scheidegger, Lovelock and Kinebanian (2010) described the everyday life of two families with disabled children in Tibet. Galvaan (2012) presented a critical ethnographic study illustrating the impact of both historical and contemporary socio-economic and political factors on the occupational choice of marginalised adolescents living in a community in South Africa. McElroy et al (2012) explored the effect of war and displacement on the occupation of refugees in Northern Uganda, exploring basic daily, productive occupation, illustrating the severe disruption caused by the war and its aftermath, and what the impact of such disruption can tell us about the nature of occupation and its importance for people. Finally, Alsakar, Bongaardt, & Josephsson (2009) have developed a mini-ethnography methodology focusing on individual's daily round of activities as enacted narrative within the local culture, and make strong claims for the importance of research that explores the meaning making processes of everyday action.

In summary, there have been a variety studies exploring occupation through ethnography. Of these a small number have specifically studied aspects of occupation and others the impact of the context on occupation. Most have used a combination of observation/participation and interviews, with many giving priority to interviews, perhaps reflecting the individualism characteristic of understandings of occupation.

None have specifically aimed to explore occupation itself in a particular context, as in this study.

Traditional ethnography's focus on the understanding of culture has meant that an ethnography is frequently considered to be complete when the structures underlying daily life have been uncovered (Higmore, 2002). However ethnography focusing specifically on occupation is aiming to understand occupation itself, and its structures, relationships and meanings. This requires an iterative process whereby the initial focus on everyday activity leads to understanding of underlying structures, and then circles back to understanding how structures and meanings both are enacted through, but also shape, daily occupation, maintaining in this way a focus on the central importance of occupation. Using ethnographic methodology in this study entailed not only exploring the interpretations and meanings people make of their lives (Carlson & Clark, 1991) but also to hold the focus on occupation itself, in order to explore the nature of its relationship with individual and context. Here the level of focus on daily activity that I wish to maintain approaches the work of de Certeau (1984; de Certeau, Giard & Mayol, 1994/1998) and his exploration of everyday life, which comes between and within structural and subjective positions, a position already discussed as important for this study.

In planning the study I stated that alongside ethnography, a second strategy, narrative would also be used, proposing that four life stories would be created. I believed that this would give a rich set of interconnected images reflecting the everyday activities of the people involved, with ethnography being used to develop an analysis of the multiple social and cultural forms within which action emerges, whereas narrative would be used to explore the individuals' experiences and perceptions of their activity (Atkinson & Delamont, 2005). However, as my understanding of daily activity emerged, and through undertaking two sets of interviews, I appreciated that taking part in or watching daily activity as it takes place, and being told about aspects of that daily activity from a distance in a particular setting and to a particular audience, are two quite different viewpoints, epistemologically at variance with one another and I made the decision to prioritise being in the situation with the participants over a more distanced perspective on their experience.

## **Choosing the setting.**

The study was situated in Melissa, a small town of officially 3,012 inhabitants situated 150 kilometres from Athens. This town had no particularly distinguishing characteristics; it was neither one of those towns favoured by foreign tourists, nor a particularly small, isolated village maintaining what was seen to be a traditional way of life. It is what would probably be described as a market town.

The town had been known to me for the previous 10 years on an informal basis; my family has a holiday home in the area, and I believed that this existing relationship would facilitate the data collection process. I considered that this facilitation would be both at a practical level (some existing knowledge of the people, place and institutions of the town, and reduced financial outlays during data collection) but also in my relationship with the town. The decision to locate the research in a setting with which I was familiar was also based in the contemporary discussions regarding 'insider' research (Bishop, 2005). While issues of power are inherent to any research project and while some experience of a setting does not automatically ensure the quality of relations, I did perceive that my existing relationship with the town would assist me to approach the complex webs of relationships inherent to any situation with some awareness and prior knowledge.

I did not consider the town to be a single unit, with boundaries and structures rigidly defining people's lives, as was the case in traditional ethnographic studies (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). With local large towns less than 45 minutes drive away and Athens easily accessible by train or car, inhabitants moved in and out of the town regularly for a range of purposes and activities, while the World Wide Web ensured the inhabitants were members of the global village. However the more limited geographical location enabled me to have a greater sense of the place in which the inhabitants were living out their lives, of changes as businesses opened and closed, elections were held, and as community and seasonal events were organised.

I also did not presume that these common events and structures were part of a culture uniformly reproduced amongst the inhabitants. Both Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration and Bourdieu's (1972/1977) theory of habitus emphasise the agency of

the individual together with the influences of social structures, while de Certeau's (1984) work on the practice of everyday life makes the importance of individual action clear as he or she employs 'tactics' that turn structural influences to his or her advantage. However, despite the diversity I did recognise that within the town there would be a shared practical and largely tacit knowledge of what was usual, the *kathemerinótita* (everyday), and that this would be possible to explore during the process of this study.

### **Research methods.**

Consistent with an ethnographic methodology the primary data collection methods were observation of, and participation in, occupation (Davies, 2008), enabling my direct engagement in the social world (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). I began to enter the role of researcher in the town in March 2009 and completed data collection in August 2011. Following a selective intermittent time mode (Jeffrey & Troman, 2004) I spent 8 to 10 days each month in the town, resulting in a total of 270 days over the data collection period. A strategy for observation (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007) ensured that over the period I was present during all seasons, at the main community events and that I had spent at least some time in the town during all the 24 hours of the day and all days of the week. Inevitably I 'missed' events, but in that way I was like many other townspeople, and like them I tried to catch up with the news through local media and chatting to acquaintances.

As well as attending most of the major community events (including religious ceremonies, celebrations of national and local holidays, cultural evenings, award ceremonies, and the annual meetings of associations) I also lived my daily life in the town, shopping, having a coffee in the square and going for meals. I was also occasionally invited to people's home for coffee or for a celebratory meal.

Within this overall landscape of living in the town, I spent varying amounts of time with about 50 people. With some of these I conducted specific interviews, for example with the local newspaper editor and with the presidents of the Women's Association, the Hill Walking Association, the Folk Lore Association and the Association for Touristic Development. With other people I 'bumped' into them regularly, while with others I just

'hung out'. These were mainly shop keepers, both those who spent some time each day at the door of their shops chatting to passers-by and neighbours, and those from whom I shopped regularly, together with a small number of employees in undemanding jobs with time to chat. Finally there were a small number of people, about 10, with whom I came to regularly spend time, and with three of them made recorded interviews about their lives. The people with whom I spent the most time are introduced in *Appendix D*.

I also collected local documents such as the local newspaper, read the local blogs, took photographs and read books on the area. I also kept notes of national events that took place over the period that could potentially be an influence on the town's inhabitants. A local amateur photographer also began to regularly send me his photographs of the various events held in the town.

However, ethnographic research is a process. As understanding increases, of the setting, of possible theoretical understandings and explanations, of relationships and of myself as researcher, certain paths are taken and others are left unexplored. In continuation I will endeavour to illustrate some of the turning points, the questions, and the paths chosen, through this research journey.

### ***Initial data collection.***

During the early stages of data collection, as well as beginning the process of developing relationships with a number of people in the town, I systematically recorded details and took a large number of photographs of the spaces and places of the town. This included its location and the physical characteristics of the surrounding area, the layout of the town, the shops, businesses and places of entertainment in the town, the houses and the public squares, roads and other places (churches, municipal and public buildings). I observed not only details of their position, shape and construction, but also recorded how they were used; what people said about them and did in them. I also noted the related temporal organisation, including not only the institutionalised temporal organisation of church services, the school and public offices but also the social and common sense rhythms of when things should be done (Bash, 2000; Mills, 2000).

These early observations of the spaces and places, the temporal structures and the social institutions that made up the town and the surrounding area, gave me an initial understanding of the fabric of daily life, the ongoing flow within which daily activity was embedded. These have been published in a book chapter (Kantartzis, Molineux, & Foster, 2012) (See *Appendix E*).

### ***Development of data collection - Sharpening the focus.***

It is stated that in ethnographic research an initial broad framework for observation will be gradually narrowed or funnelled (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007), focusing on areas of particular significance as the data analysis proceeds. This statement presents a fully rational process, led by the researcher. My experience was of a much more emergent process, with unexpected events, chance encounters and sheer luck, shifting the process on. I considered and sometimes tried a number of approaches to see which would lead to increased depth of understanding. There were two developments in the data collection process that I consider to be of particular significance. The first relates to my own position in the research and the second to an increasing focus on occupation itself.

Regarding my own position, as I began to feel more comfortable with my new role as researcher I became able to be more aware of my own daily life in the town. As I observed and described the places of the town and considered their impact on other people's activities, I became increasingly aware of their impact on myself and my responses to the places and events in which I engaged. I began to appreciate that participant observation is an embodied activity (O'Reilly, 2012), and that an important tool in understanding how occupation emerges within this particular setting would be my own experience of that process. I included reflections of my own response to events in the field notes, and observed my own change in strategies in order to operate more effectively in this town. For example I became less focused on arranging meetings and planning strategies for observation and would just go to the town to 'see what happens'. I accepted off-the-cuff coffee and lunch invitations, increasingly conscious of entering the daily stream of occupation.

At the same time I also experienced a reflection of my researcher identity in my relationship with people around me. People seemed to come to know that I was interested in talking and doing things with them, and particularly expected me to be interested and wanting to participate in the occasional events and traditions, ensuring I had the relevant information. However more mundane occupation remained largely acted and not discussed and this became a focus of my concern.

Although participant observation was the primary data collecting tool selected for this study I had anticipated that a good deal of information would be available from casual conversations, both regarding what people felt to be important or significant in their daily lives but also regarding the mundane day to day doing of life. However, while people would describe to me in detail and talk with each other about major events, traditions and celebrations, talking about day to day activity was much more restricted. In a similar way discussions of what was important in life and links to health and well-being were rather superficial; it seemed I was inviting people to discuss something that rarely entered discourse.

Difficulties in talking about both the everyday but also about personal choices, beliefs and motivations, have been discussed from a variety of perspectives. I was experiencing the theoretical understandings that I had explored, that much of daily activity involves practical knowledge that is tacit or pre-discursive (e.g. de Certeau, 1984; Giddens, 1984). It was also evident that many people were not familiar with the activity of subjective reflection on their aims and purposes in life. It has been argued that the view of the rational individual that emerged with Western modern thought may not be consistent with the Ottoman heritage of the Greek people or the Byzantine Orthodox religion that views the self as inherently relational (Paxson, 2004). Additionally, Collier (1986, cited by Paxson, 2004, p. 8) has suggested that in communities such as this one, where status and wealth have been largely inherited, traditional subjectivity is concerned with upholding externally imposed social conventions. This is opposed to more 'modern' communities where waged labour leads to a system where status is achieved, which requires the verbalisation of inner thoughts and the acting out of individual targets. Finally, the interview society of the West (Chase, 2005), while not absent from Greece, remains more focused on demonstrable

achievements and political events, with reality TV and chat shows that present greater exploration of the self, first appearing in Greece in only the past eight years.

This led me to focus increasingly on observing occupation itself, and particularly the mundane or taken-for-granted occupations of everyday life. While continuing to be an observing-participant in community events, I also took part in and observed the doing of and accompanying casual conversations of innumerable daily *dhouleiés* (work/tasks): shopping, paid work, gardening, picking up children from school, cooking, and other occupations such as going out and hanging out. From the earlier stages of data collection I had been aware of the particularly fluid, interrelated and emergent nature of daily occupation in the town. I now began to take greater note of how occupation emerged and developed, and also how it changed course as small actions, such as a wave, a phone call, a hooted car horn, were influential in changing the direction of a conversation or an activity. I also became aware of what de Certeau (1984) described as tactics, that is, small actions that in a precise instant change a situation to one's advantage, change the organisation of a space, or relations amongst successive acts. These were a small window into what the person considered worth achieving, changing or manipulating. I understood that what people considered to be a usual way to live was continuously being enacted (and challenged) in the occupation of their daily lives. Therefore, in the final period of data collection, I focused particularly on careful observation of daily occupation of all kinds.

### ***Coming to the end.***

After approximately 30 months, I decided to reduce my contact with the town. This was as it was becoming clear from the ongoing data analysis that sufficient data had been obtained, but also that I required a space in which to gain some physical and mental distance from the town, in order to make decisions regarding, and proceed with, the analysis.

Unlike traditional ethnographies where the researcher leaves the foreign place to return to their homeland, leaving the town was less a physical leaving and more a decision that I would no longer be observing and participating in activity in the same way and keeping fieldnotes. I told people that I was beginning to write the thesis and that I would



be less often in the town. When I did spend time in the town I ensured that as far as possible, I saw those people with whom I had regularly interacted. With some I had specifically developed a relationship because of the study and it will be a matter of time as to how and to what degree our relationship is maintained (Stebbins, 1991). With others we had become friends or deepened an existing friendship and ongoing contact is occurring as a natural continuation. In all cases I recognised that both for myself and others, completing the data collection period required a process of exiting the town comparable to that of entering it, a process of mutually negotiated changing relationships (Cutcliffe & Ramcharan, 2002). I also recognised my on-going ethical responsibilities to those with whom I developed relationships, and particularly those for whom our relationship was important (Taylor, 1991).

### ***What was not data.***

In a study of this nature where the researcher spends a considerable number of days living in a certain place, it is necessary to consider what will be recorded and enter the process of analysis and interpretation and what will not. As indicated in the previous sections, this changed and was refined throughout the data collection period as I explored both my own daily life and experiences as they emerged in the town, but also focused more on daily doing and conversations. In addition there were certain times when I did not record fieldnotes. For example, in general I did not record my own daily activities within and around my own home, apart from when these were specifically related to the setting, for example, regulations for cutting long grass to reduce the fire risk in the summer, or involved people of the town, for example, visits by the local plumber to fix our boiler. Also, and particularly in the early stages of the research, I did not include as data, evenings out with my husband and local friends, when I understood that I was participating and seen to participate as a friend and not a researcher. As people became more familiar with the study, I recorded these events more frequently.

In addition, throughout the study there were some situations where I would have usually kept fieldnotes but did not, as the person or people talked of issues that they did not want included. On other occasions something happened or was said that I recorded although I had not planned to, because of its particular significance and

relevance to the study, or because the nature of life is such that I could not always plan when and what opportunities would arise. An example was early one morning when I went, still half asleep, to the supermarket to buy milk, data collection was not on my mind. A woman working in the supermarket whom I had seen on innumerable occasions without entering into particular discussion, said to me: "Morning, we have seen you a lot more in the town recently..." Her unspoken question hung in the air, a perfect opportunity to tell her about the study, unplanned and unforeseen.

### **Data recording.**

Data recording took a number of forms. Fieldnotes are the traditional means in ethnography for recording data from observations and interviews (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Due to the informal, casual and physical nature of observer-participation it was rarely possible to write notes during participation or as I observed and chatted to people. Therefore I made mental notes at the time which I wrote up as full fieldnotes as soon after the events as possible. My experience as an occupational therapist, where keeping mental notes throughout a therapeutic session is essential, was undoubtedly helpful here.

In the fieldnotes for each period of observation or participation I initially recorded details of the weather or changing seasons and noted my own mood, ideas or intentions as I entered the town. I next recorded details of the observation/participation, that is, the time and place, followed by a detailed description of the persons involved, what was said and done and by whom. I recorded observations and informal conversations using the "concrete principle" (Suzuki, Ahluwalia, Kwong Arora, & Mattis, 2007, p. 301); as they had taken place, without analysis or interpretation and, in the case of conversations, using as far as possible the original words, in Greek, of the individuals and myself. Finally I noted any immediate comments or thoughts that I had, including language issues. Just over 800 pages of field notes were completed. The field notes were completed electronically in a Word document, and stored in a password secured area (see *Appendix F* for example of field notes).

I was always aware that my observations were necessarily selective (Dickie, 2003a) and that fieldnotes recorded after the event would inevitably be incomplete (Bailey,

1996; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). I spent considerable time in reflection immediately following each period of observation-participation and fieldnote recording, and this frequently led to additions to the fieldnotes, but also additions to my fieldwork journal.

I kept a fieldwork journal throughout the research, and it indeed became a natural history of the process (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007) as I noted ideas, questions and emerging themes from the fieldnotes. I also recorded relevant ideas and theories from the literature and discussed these in relation to reflections emerging from the field work. Additionally, I developed in the fieldwork journal ideas and plans for observations, questions and discussions to be held with particular individuals or groups. Finally, and importantly, the journal also offered a space for recording my impressions and personal feelings (Bailey, 1996). It enabled a process of ongoing reflexivity that revealed my own perceptions and attitudes as they were influencing the research process (Bransford, 2006), facilitating my awareness of what I was seeing and not seeing, and what I was counting as data and so recording (Dickie, 2003a). This process resulted in further checking and exploration of information, searching out new sources and events and talking through ideas and perceptions with participants.

Finally a number of audio-recorded interviews were held with three individuals, ranging in total length from one and a half to five hours for each individual. These were recorded using a digital voice recorder and immediately following the interview the data was transferred to a password protected lap top and the original recording deleted. I transcribed these interviews in the original Greek and used the simplified transcription symbols presented in Silverman (2010). I then translated the transcripts into English in order to make them accessible to the supervisors of the study, resulting in 111 pages of transcript and these were included in the data analysis, the original Greek being used for reference to check concepts and understandings.

## **Data Analysis. Understanding, Interpretation and Presentation**

Data analysis in ethnography is described as an ongoing, iterative process between the data obtained in the field and the emerging ideas (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Wilding & Whiteford, 2007). Analysis involves understanding and not just describing what is going on, bringing the research process to a point where it begins to be possible to develop answers to the questions that the study is hoping to answer. Therefore, analysis was also considered as part of the process of deciding what questions I should ask, which people to talk to and which events to attend, of deciding what I considered data and therefore recorded, and what I did not understand and needed to explore further. Analysis was also evident in the daily and ongoing self-questioning in which the reflective researcher engages (Davies, 2008); in the ongoing questions that I asked myself - what am I seeing, hearing and feeling and what might this mean?

More formal data analysis, that is, initial coding of the data, did not start simultaneously with data gathering, as is commonly advised (Maxwell 2008), but about one year later. It was not possible to begin earlier due to the time constraints of a part-time study with the demands of the initial stages of data collection, observer participation and the need to keep detailed fieldnotes, a problem commonly encountered (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). In the initial design stages of the study, I had decided that analysis would follow the steps commonly outlined for ethnographic research (Davies, 2008; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). This stage will be discussed first, followed by a discussion of the need for an additional data analysis procedure and how this was developed.

### **Coding, categorising and understanding concepts.**

A first step in analysis, commonly described in ethnographic research, is to begin to organise the large amount of fieldnotes and other data by developing a set of categories, and by coding the data (Davies, 2008). Data that were available for analysis included 800 pages of fieldnotes and 111 pages of transcripts from three recorded interviews. I also had copies of a number of local publications, access to local web-sites and blogs and photographs that I had taken or had been sent by the local

unofficial photographer. At this initial stage only the fieldnotes were used to develop categories and were coded.

I devised an initial framework for coding based on the research questions and then adapted and developed this following the first close reading of all the fieldnotes and in continuation during the coding of the data (Davies, 2008). Using my existing theoretical understandings and the research questions to formulate these categories was useful in providing an initial structure for coding the large amounts of data. I also found this deliberate, non-bracketing of my position valuable in that it encouraged me to reflect on what I thought I already knew and sensitised me to alternative viewpoints emerging from the data. Throughout the coding process I kept a record of both my original and the emerging categories, which became useful in the process of interpretation.

Data were coded into this initial structure, with further categories being constructed as required. The initial categories that emerged from the research questions, that Maxwell (2009) refers to as organisational categories, were based around the idea of an individual doing an occupation and aimed to answer the questions – who, what, where, how, with whom and why. An initial reading of the fieldnotes changed the focus of the categories from what the individual was doing to a broader focus on occupation itself, including what was being done (by individuals, groups and the community), who was involved, and how occupation emerged and was performed. Categories were also added for aspects not included in the initial framework, for example, for details of institutions, the climate and nature, processes of change (individual and community), and to capture ideas and activities around health and the purpose and meaning of life. A number of emic categories were also developed. For example in the category regarding 'who', sub-categories emerged using the Greek terms for the various relationships between people, which could not be adequately conceptualised using an English word (see also *Appendix A*). In addition some more interpretive categories developed particularly focusing on understanding the multiple meanings and purposes of action. An ongoing critical focus led me to look for gaps and contradictions (Bransford, 2006) and categories emerged focusing on 'what is missing' and 'what is not done', relating to both issues identified by the townspeople and my own observations including how people avoided or manipulated situations in order to 'not do' something. As well as categories, cases were developed, where all data related to

particular individuals were coded. Thirty such cases were developed plus four cases that referred to couples, where I almost always only had contact with the pair together.

All field notes were coded using QSR International's NVivo 9 qualitative data analysis software. Coding did not follow a line by line process, but the text was coded in chunks that ranged in length from part of one sentence to a whole paragraph. All data were coded in as many categories as necessary (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). For example a passage describing Mr. Nikos working in his shop, was coded in its entirety in the case 'Mr. Nikos' and in the category 'work', while sections of the passage were coded as appropriate, for example, his comments regarding whether the customer will be satisfied with the outcome were coded both as 'attitudes to work' and 'relationships with customers'.

Therefore, by the completion of a first stage of reading and coding of all the field notes, categories had been developed identifying concrete elements (e.g. number and types of shops), emic categories (e.g. the way that social relationships were categorised and named) and some interpretive categories (e.g. having a purpose to life and maintaining status that identified the reasons for peoples' occupation). Categories contained both Greek and English terms in order to retain Greek concepts.

I then reviewed the categories, some of the categories were split into subcategories and data transferred, and a conceptual understanding of each category was developed. The categories created are presented in Table 1 and the conceptual understanding of one category is presented in *Appendix G* as an example.

**TABLE 1: Categorisation of data**

(In bold original categories). Deletions indicate changes as coding progressed)

What is done, what happens ~~What do people do?~~

- Activities for oneself
- Activities of self-care
- Activities of and for the town
- Activities with and for others
- Activities expressing disagreement
- Advertising events
- Douleies (jobs in home and outside, for other people)
- Douleia (paid work)
- Ekdiloses and yiortes (events and celebrations – town)
- Ekdromes (excursions by associations, friends, family)
- Going out - Na vgo, volta, (go out, stroll,), for coffee
- Ksekourasi (rest)
- Little acts
- One off events
- Traditional occupations
- What isn't done
- Yiortes (family based celebrations)

**Where** (places)

- H Geitonia (the neighbourhood)
- Locales surrounding the town
- Public places – open spaces, squares, streets
- Public buildings
- Places for entertainment/socializing
- Sti doyleia (at work)
- The town
- To spiti (the home)
- Xorafia (fields)

**How** daily life is ~~are they~~ planned and executed

- **Execution**
  - Public/private
  - Supported or not by others
  - Mood
  - Psixi (done with your soul)
  - Co-occupations
  - Interfolding of multiple occupations
  - Adapting
  - How (speed, effort, pace, care)
  - Familiar or new
- How daily life emerges **Planning**
  - Inter-relatedness (internal/external factors)
  - Subjective factors
  - Context driven
  - Unpredictable or routine
  - Ongoing from previous day
- Objects and artefacts

- Spatial
- Temporality

What is missing

The people involved ~~who does them~~

- Gender/age related
- Gnostous (people known)
- Individual
- Friends
- Oi ksenoi (foreigners/ others)
- Oi geitones (neighbours)
- Oikogeneia (family , immediate)
- Parea (friendship group)
- Customers
- Soi/ koumparoi (family extended)
- Work colleagues, employers and employees
- Specific professions
- To xorio (the village)

**Why do they do these activities**—what they do?

- Individual level
  - Relationships with others
  - Maintaining status and place
  - Care and maintenance of self and important others
  - Something to do
  - To go out and have a change
  - Attitudes, values, beliefs
  - Interests
  - Needs
  - Subjective experience
- **Institutional influences**
  - Church
  - State, local and national
  - Social
  - Economic
  - Technological
- Nature
  - Climate, seasonal change
  - Proximity of nature
- Why do they not do things

~~Meaning~~

**Health**

- H kathimerinotita (everydayness)
- Life
- Sickness/trauma/disability

Change and Dealing with events

- Attitudes to change and events
- Community
- Individual change/adjustments

Embodiment

- Embodied experiences
- Perceptions of the townspeople
- Stories of the town

The next stage in ethnographic data analysis is to begin to explore the relationships between the concepts (Davies, 2008). However, as it has been noted, there is no general formula for analysis of ethnographic data (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007), and I became concerned that the process I adopted should not be a reductive process to identify common themes, but one that would maintain the multidimensionality and complexity of daily life as I had come to understand it by this stage in the research.

By this stage in the process of the study and the analysis of the data I had developed an understanding of occupation as fluid and flexible, and strongly influenced and emerging from the context. As analysis had progressed I had engaged in an exploration of the work of John Dewey and particularly his writings on transactionalism (Dewey, 1922/2007, 1958; Dewey & Bentley, 1949), which have been introduced to the disciplines of occupational therapy and occupational science over the past decade (Cutchin, 2004; Cutchin et al., 2008; Cutchin & Dickie, 2012b; Dickie et al., 2006; Frank, 2011; Kuo, 2011). Although the theory of transactionalism was developed in North America, it had become evident that it supported my developing understanding of occupation in the town.

I wished therefore to continue the analysis in such a way as to enable an integration of all the elements of the situation, contextual and individual, within an understanding of occupation. I also wished to develop further my understanding of the direction or reasons “with which” occupation was done (Ricoeur, 1986/2008, p.188), that is, the largely practical knowledge that the people of town shared around what they understood to be usual daily life. It was based on these emerging understandings that I felt it important to adopt an analytic approach that would explore and maintain the multidimensional transactional nature of shared daily life.

### **Developing a narrative understanding of daily life.**

I began to explore whether a narrative understanding of people’s activities (Polkinghorne, 1995) would not only enable exploration of the meanings inherent in everyday action, but also maintain the wholeness of everyday activity (the inter-relationship, or as I was coming to understand it, transaction, of all elements – spatial, temporal and social). In this exploration I was aided by participation in a postgraduate



module 'From what to how; contemporary narrative methodology in health care research' held by the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, Sweden led by Staffan Josephsson, Sissel Alsakar and Eric Asaba. These leaders together with the other participants in the course enabled a process which enriched my understanding of narrative and its analytic potential in this research process.

Supporting the use of narrative as an analytic strategy in this ethnographic research was both the theory of narrative as a form of cognition and particularly the idea of the pre-narrative nature of everyday activity as described by Ricoeur (1984), as introduced in Chapter 2. However, Ricoeur's (1984) theory of mimesis supports not only the essentially pre-narrative of daily life (mimesis<sub>1</sub>), but also introduces the idea of emplotment as the events of everyday life are configured into possible plots (mimesis<sub>2</sub>). This process, within ethnographic research such as this, can be understood as the central part of the process of analysis, leading to the telling of the story to an audience (mimesis<sub>3</sub>) in the completed, written thesis. Understanding the findings of research as a narrative developed and told in a particular way to a particular audience reflects contemporary understandings of the shifting, situated and relative nature of both daily life and the ethnographic inquiry itself (Behar, 1993; Kondo, 1990).

The narrative analysis in this study took as its starting point the analytical approach of Sissel Alsaker in her exploration of narrative-in-action (Alsaker, Bongaardt, & Josephsson, 2009; Alsaker & Josephsson, 2011). Alsaker's approach was underpinned by Ricoeur's (1984) theory of mimesis, and focused on individual women and the potential stories which emerged from the enacted narrative of their action, and how these reflected or related to the narratives held within the local culture. Her approach suggested that the practical shared knowledge of everyday life that I wished to understand could be considered shared narratives, and that these were rooted or founded in the action of everyday life (the pre-narrative nature of action, as described by Ricoeur in the first fold of mimesis). In this way the activity of the people of the town could be seen as both reflecting and continually re-creating the ongoing shared narratives of what was valued but also usual in everyday life in the town.

The analysis therefore focused on exploring action and the setting in which it occurred as the pre-narrative foundation, the pre-verbalised stage of the shared stories of the

town. Based on Ricoeur's (1984) theory of mimesis, analysis became a process of configuring the possible plots of the activity of the people of the town. This is the second fold of mimesis. The plot is central to any narrative and the process of emplotment is the operation which draws together, orders and synthesises the heterogeneous elements of the situation (Ricoeur, 1984). Through the analysis and process of emplotment I wished to develop an interpretation of the practical knowledge of occupation in the town.

The construction of plots or a plot, emerging from the multiple possible interpretations of the data, is a hermeneutic process aiming to achieve understanding (Alsakar & Josephsson, 2011; Kinsella, 2006). I used philosophical hermeneutics as described by Gadamer (2004) and developed by Ricoeur (1991) to support both the theoretical underpinnings and the process of analysis. Underpinning my use of hermeneutics, which is usually associated with the exploration of texts, is Ricoeur's work (1991) comparing the structure of action with the structure of text and the similarity of their inner traits. He proposes that due to these similarities doing can be seen as a kind of utterance (action as text) and therefore open to hermeneutic exploration and understanding. Also important to this study is the recognition in philosophical hermeneutics that the aim is not to uncover the intentions of the author (or the actor) behind the text but "to unfold, in front of the text, the 'world' it opens up and discloses" (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 33). For this study, this enabled moving beyond exploring the original intentions of the participants, to exploring what their activities could reveal of their world.

The process of analysis following philosophical hermeneutics is circular, the hermeneutic circle. In brief, this involves initial attention to one's existing knowledge and gaps in one's knowledge. This is followed by openness to alternative understandings and the posing of relevant questions. Possible understandings are then tested against alternatives. Parts are examined against the whole and back again to the parts. Throughout all the process awareness is maintained of the researcher's position, or horizon, which inevitably is part of the process (Kinsella, 2006; Koch, 1996; Polkinghorne, 2000; Ricoeur, 1986/2008). The process allows for an ongoing interpretive interplay between actions and the context, between parts and the whole, until a consistent interpretation is reached (Alsakar & Josephsson, 2011); in this case

the emplotment of the narrative of occupation in the town. The following sections will discuss the elements of this process, and while unavoidably presented in a linear form, the circular and iterative nature of the hermeneutic process that leads to ever deepening understanding and thereby to interpretation is emphasised.

### ***Attending to my own position.***

I have already discussed my own position in relation to this study and will not refer to it again here in detail, although ongoing awareness of my horizon – my knowledge, understandings, beliefs and prejudices - were an essential part of the analytic process. I also was aware of the importance of my embodied experiences of the town. The fieldnotes were only partial descriptions of observed events and they served as reminders that stimulated memories of the experiences. Although memories are only partial representations, distorted by perception and time, I considered it important to bring them into the hermeneutic process of questions and answering (Lawn, 2006).

### ***The exploration of parts.***

A further element of the process involved focusing on sections of the data. In narrative analysis data is considered to be a variety of events, actions and stories, and data are not considered to be only textual from interviews (Alsakar et al., 2009; Bonsall, 2011). It was therefore appropriate that the fieldnotes and the transcripts of the recorded interviews formed the primary data for this analysis.

Asaba and Jackson (2011) recommended that when endeavouring to understand the plot of a story, particular attention be paid to those events that seem particularly significant, (significant being those that seem surprising or particularly meaningful for myself or for the participants) (Ohman & Asaba, 2009). However, as this study was focusing on everyday activity as a whole, and with an understanding that all actions, however small and mundane, carry meaning linked to underpinning desires and values, I included as wide a range and type of action as possible. As well as studying particular events and activities I also studied time bounded periods that I had spent in a particular place where a variety of activities were taking place, extending my Western understanding of occupation beyond named, chunks of action. I also explored

moments of activity, lasting for seconds, particularly those that changed or interrupted in some way the ongoing flow of activity and therefore indicated desire or intent.

Exploration of these sections of data involved asking questions. I based my questions on Ricoeur's (1991) discussion of the structural, symbolic and temporal features of action. These questions included: What is happening here? What is the practical knowledge or understanding that people seem to have in this situation? What symbols are involved and what meaning do they carry? What do people seem to be moving towards achieving with their activities? Why is this action emerging now, in this time and place? What are the institutions and macro level factors that are influencing this situation? (An example of field notes with the comments that I noted during the analysis process is presented in *Appendix H*). All elements of the situation were brought into this process of questioning, from climatic, spatial and temporal to individual, as well action. Questions such as these enabled me to begin to develop possible plots that would explicate the reasons with which people were acting, and which would begin to organise and synthesis the multiple elements into a coherent whole. The questions also enabled me to further explore the nature of occupation itself, how it emerged and was structured within each of the parts of the data that I was exploring.

### ***Moving between parts and the whole.***

I compared the possible plots of one section of data with the next, and each section with the overall data, working back and forth to clarify and develop the emerging plots. Meanings were explored through a circular process of moving from the whole (the overall fabric of daily life) to the parts (the actions of individuals and groups, the places and temporal aspects) and back again in an ongoing process to develop increasing clarity of understanding and interpretation of meanings.

As well as focusing on the primary data I also considered other elements. I brought into consideration the categories and their descriptions developed during the first stage of data analysis, considering the possible plots in relation to these and using them to strengthen the emerging interpretations. Other data, photographs and other artefacts (newspapers, books and websites), were used for further reflection on what these

could tell me about the world they were created in and the people who created them, and similarly were incorporated in the ongoing circular process of analysis.

### ***Completing the process.***

Through the hermeneutic process I gradually developed a consistent interpretation of occupation in the town. I configured three plots of occupation in the town that tell of what people were working towards, wanting to maintain, considered desirable and valued. I also developed an understanding of the nature of occupation as a form of activity, including the location of occupation in relation to the individual and the context, and also in relation to micro, meso and macro levels.

### **Presenting the findings.**

Writing the findings is closely related to the analytic process (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Within this study, the presentation of findings is understood within the process of mimesis as discussed by Ricoeur (1984). Mimesis describes the development of a narrative from action through emplotment, which is told to an audience and so returns to the world of action and life as the listener engages with the world of the narrative (Ricoeur, 1991). In this thesis the action upon which the narrative is based is my lived and observed experience of daily life in the town of Melissa over a period of 30 months. Analysis involved explanation and interpretation with the process of emplotment which enabled the development of a narrative that would tell of occupation in the town. Conceptual categories that were developed in the first stage of data analysis were combined with the understanding of occupation that emerged in the narrative analysis. The constructed narrative of occupation in the town is told in this thesis, and represents the third fold of the mimetic process (Ricoeur, 1984). It was developed to be told in a particular way to a particular audience, related to the demands of an academic thesis (Van Maanen, 1988). This interpretation of occupation that I present in the following chapters is not intended to represent some truth that I found in the data (Koch, 1996), but is one possible construction which I developed through the process of analysis.

I present the findings as a narrative of occupation in the town of Melissa. Various elements of the narrative will be discussed in separate chapters, which when combined aim to illustrate occupation in the town as a whole. This also reflects the transactional view of occupation that was developed, underpinned by Dewey's theory of transactionalism (Dewey & Bentley, 1949), where all elements are contingent and part of one whole.

Inevitably, constructing a narrative required decisions to be made about what to include and what to leave out, what to highlight and what to place in the background. This narrative is built around action, that is, occupation, and so the first part of the narrative of the town considers occupation itself and how I came to understand it. In continuation the setting is presented, an exploration of the conditions, temporal, spatial and social, of which occupation was part. Central elements in any narrative are the plot or plots, the reasons with which people undertake their occupation, and through these to illustrate what is important and what is valued. A further three chapters present these plots, embedded, like any story, in the place and time of which they are part (Bailey, 2007). Essential to all these chapters are the characters of the narrative, the various people of the town with whom I lived over the 30 month period, who, with the help of extracts from field notes and vignettes of their experiences, help build the narrative. My own character is also unavoidably present, together with my understandings and my reflections. And finally the voice of the academic world is also present through opinions and sources (Polkinghorne, 1995). Extracts from fieldnotes, indicated by italics, are presented throughout the presentation of findings.

Higmore (2002) in discussing strategies to investigate the everyday refers to the variety of perspectives on this immense and complex subject, including the particular and the general, agency and structure, experiences/feelings and institutions/discourse, resistance and power, micro and macro analysis. His words resonated strongly for me as I struggled to find a way to put into a few pages the experiences of over two years, the results of analysis, together with my lived experience and the experiences of the inhabitants, and my resulting understanding of the multidimensionality of occupation. I acknowledge my active role in the creation of the narrative that is presented here and that these are my understandings that have emerged from my interactions with a particular number of individuals with whom a particular communication and relationship

developed over a limited period of time (Lawlor & Mattingly, 2001; Primeau, 2003; Suzuki et al., 2007). Alternative ways of telling about occupation could be found and my perspective on the world of the town is just that, one of many possible perspectives (Lawn, 2006), and is provisional and limited as events are in constant flux.

## **Ethical Issues**

The proposal for this research was approved by the Faculty of Health Research Ethics Committee of Leeds Metropolitan University (Research Ethics Application: 170) as a low-risk project involving human participants. Clear information and transparency regarding my purpose, respect for the individual and their privacy, and tools such as informed consent, were central elements of the ethical considerations in this study from the outset. The town, any identifying features and all persons were given pseudonyms. All fieldnotes and any other sensitive data were kept in a password protected computer.

Throughout the process of the study ethical issues, or situated dilemmas (O'Reilly, 2012) arose. In the early stages I became concerned about the ethics of the process of developing relationships with people in the town. Shaffir (1991) discussed how fieldwork always involves various degrees of pretence and dissimulation, and I was unsure of the honesty of my conduct as I engaged in social behaviour different from that I would have usually engaged in, and emphasised the commonalities of my identity (e.g. female, mother) with those of participants. I perceived the relationships as unnatural as I modified my usual behaviour to facilitate the flow of information. However it gradually appeared that participants were also using our relationship as more than a common social relationship. A number of women confided that because I was an outsider they were telling me things they could not speak about to fellow townspeople, while others commented how much they appreciated the opportunity to talk about their daily lives to someone who was interested in just that. For these women the role of researcher enabled the emergence of a different, but also valued, relationship. This positive response to my self-presentation (Harrington, 2003) further facilitated the integration of researcher into my self-identity and I gained confidence to

ask further questions, explore issues, and search out for information. I expanded my contacts, conscious of the bridges rather than the barriers between our identities.

However, as relationships developed other ethical issues gained prominence and particularly those around information and consent. From the planning stages of the study I was aware that in an ethnographic study there would always be people involved in activities in which I was observing and participating that would not be aware of the study. I adhered to ethical guidelines (British Psychological Society, 2008) that advise that observations of public behaviour be restricted to those situations where people would reasonably expect to be observed by strangers, while remaining sensitive to behaviour that persons might not wish to be recorded or would regard as private. I also ensured that I did not record a person's identifying features (American Anthropological Association, 2004), but focused on common features and occupation. All people with whom I had regular contact were aware of the research, although it quickly emerged that the Participant Information Sheet was "too English" as someone explained to me, totally unfamiliar in its style and content, and therefore alienating. I prepared a second version, with a short outline of key points on one side, and the additional extended information on the other. I found most people at least glanced through the shortened version before turning to me for verbal explanation, and I then left it with them to read at their leisure. As time went on, I would deliberately remind them of the study if I was asking particular questions or if we were doing something together, ensuring re-establishment of consent (Cutcliffe & Ramcharan, 2002). In this way I attempted to ensure on-going verbal consent, underpinned by the ongoing freedom of the other person to engage or not in activity or conversation with me (American Anthropological Association, 2004). However, at the same time I remained, primarily, a temporary inhabitant, and therefore was aware that at times people were viewing me and interacting with me in roles other than that of researcher. My responsibility to ensure the privacy and dignity of all was the overarching principle at all times (British Psychological Society, 2008).

Cultural differences in perceptions regarding ethical procedures have been discussed in the literature, particularly regarding the notion of the autonomous individual giving consent as part of mechanistic procedures (Shklarov, 2007). I experienced that all participants were reluctant to sign consent forms, preferring to give their verbal consent



having read the information sheets and after my verbal explanation. I understood that they considered signing to be more a sign of mistrust than trust. That they had agreed to talk to me or were including me in some activity was an indication that they trusted me, and my request for their signature appeared to be an indication of bad faith in our relationship. One woman directly said “we don’t need to sign, we trust you”. Signing also seemed to be a symbol signifying the truth of what they were saying; signing such a document either implied my suspicion of the truthfulness of what they were saying or that I was wanting them to confirm a conversation as true which they were, of course, hesitant to do. I insisted only with the recorded interviews, otherwise I took on their trust (and oral consent) as a personal responsibility to ensure that I was considerate of their persons and worked with integrity throughout the process.

Throughout the research process I remained aware of my relationship with other people and potential for misunderstandings and misinterpretations, disruption to ongoing relationships, and the ongoing surveillance of each other’s activities by the people of the town. I took particular care of my relationships with people whom I knew prior to the study (Goodwin, Pope, Mort, & Smith, 2003) and whom I saw socially, initially by carefully differentiating research and non-research times, and later by ensuring they were aware of situations or conversations that were relevant and I would make note of for the study.

As already discussed, people seemed to spend little time reflecting on their daily lives, their occupation and their health and well-being, and this led to my concern regarding for whom and with whom I was doing the research. There is considerable criticism of researchers who enter a ‘foreign’ setting, observing, recording and publishing about the ‘other’ people he or she has encountered (L. Smith, 2005), including criticism from the participants themselves of how they have been represented (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). I considered whether it would be useful to promote ideas around occupation and health, perhaps organising a public discussion for the members of the Women’s Association, for example. When I discussed my research with the first president of the Association she did suggest this and I was keen to undertake this. However, shortly after this discussion she was not re-elected as President and in my interview with the new President it was not taken further. I was reluctant to impose such discussions either at an individual or group level without having the resources to offer more than

information, and instead considered that the small, informal conversations that I had with participants, the alternative views that I could bring to discussions, was more respectful of those involved and their situations.

With one participant, at his request, I produced a small document, an autobiography of his life. It followed closely our recorded interviews for which he prepared with written notes and he checked it several times to ensure the details were accurate. It included family photographs that he provided, and was written without pseudonyms. It therefore has not been included in this thesis, although the transcription of the audio recordings was included in the data analysis. He seemed to be extremely satisfied with this testimony to his life, and I was pleased to have a way to repay his contribution to the study.

Finally, ethical issues are embedded in the nature of bi-cultural research. Evident in language, they are particularly important in relation to conceptual variations and the introduction of different systems of thought (Shklarov, 2007). As discussed, this research was largely the result of my questioning of the universality, or not, of the concept expressed in the word occupation. I have also noted how part of the process of my positioning in this study regarded bringing to the fore my own understandings, primarily rooted in British systems of thought due to my upbringing, education, and the professional literature, and exploring these with participants. Emic categories were developed during data analysis, and in the presentation of the findings I use those Greek words for which there is not a sufficiently equivalent English translation. I have also prepared an appendix of those words with an attempt at explanation of the concepts, to facilitate the negotiation of meaning with the readers of this thesis (Shklarov, 2007). Finally, I remain aware that this study aiming to explore alternative ways of occupation, is also aiming to present these findings to the very audience whose understandings of occupation I am questioning. This creates the challenge of presenting an alternative view in such a way as to avoid 'othering', as understood in colonial critique (Jensen, 2011). In the current economic climate and the representations of Southern European countries in the press of the countries to the North, I consider this to be of considerable importance.

## **Evaluating the Research**

This study aimed to explore occupation in a Greek town through observation and participation in the everyday life of the town. As well as exploring who did what, when, where, how and why, I also aimed to explore the nature of occupation as a particular form of activity, its relationship both to the individual and to the context, and the shared understandings of what is usual everyday life. Emerging from an understanding of the constructed and situated nature of what we do and what we know, the research followed a qualitative design that facilitated the exploration of daily life in this town in its complexity and variety. The findings of this study, (perhaps 'creations' rather than 'findings'), are some of the multiple refractions of possibilities (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005), emerging from my specific experiences and the relationships I developed during the time that I lived in the town.

There has been ongoing discussion of how to assess the quality of qualitative research, with the four criteria described by Guba in 1981, that is credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, still regularly discussed (Shenton, 2004). Recently Guba and Lincoln (2005) have discussed the importance of considering the quality of a study in two broad areas: the research process, that is, in respect of rigour of method and the research outcome, understood as the rigour of interpretation.

### **Rigour of method.**

The aims and objectives of this study guided the choice of a qualitative research design and the related choice of methodology, methods and analysis, achieving coherence both within the process but also with the aims of the study. Such coherence is one aspect of ensuring the quality of method (A. Nelson, 2008). Rigour of method is also supported by the use the well-established research methods (Shenton, 2004) and the observation and participation of ethnographic methodology enabling the exploration of daily life at multiple levels, are methods that have been used for many decades with substantial literature to support their use.

The extended period of time that I spent in the town that included both observations of and participation in a large number of events and activities, conversations and interviews, that were recorded in detailed fieldnotes, resulted in rich data for analysis. I also immersed myself in the daily life of the town and its events through additional sources of information - the local newspaper, blogs, social network pages and photographs. Together the extended period of time and multiple data sources led me to consider that by the end of the period I had adequate data in type and amount (Morrow, 2007; Polkinghorne, 1995), to be able to explain and offer interpretation of occupation. Having adequate data was both a sense (felt in the familiarity with the town and peoples' doings), but also an acknowledgement that further time would have led to other questions and new paths to be explored. There was no ultimate truth to be reached, but an ongoing process of learning, one stage of which seemed to have been completed.

In qualitative research the researcher is an inevitable element, the primary research tool and the co-producer of findings. Reflexivity is therefore essential to identifying the position of the researcher in the research process (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). I endeavoured to maintain and present an ongoing awareness of my own position in this research, from the early stages during which my own interests and questions led to the specific research topic, through the process of beginning data collection and establishing relationships with some of the people of the town, to slowly disentangling my theoretical preconceptions, to finally endeavouring to write this thesis in a way that would express my interpretations while firmly grounding those in the daily life of the town as I experienced it. I fully utilised a research diary as a place to record my theoretical and personal questions, conflicts, observations and confusions.

### **Rigour of interpretation.**

Both Gadamar and Ricoeur in their discussions of the hermeneutic approach to the analysis of texts, emphasise that it is a process of endeavouring to develop the best possible interpretation, but one that remains, however, still only one of many (Gadamer, 1975/2004; Ricoeur, 1991). The hermeneutic circle itself, with the constant movement from parts to wholes and back again, aims, through ongoing questioning to explore, challenge and confirm possible interpretations. In exploring the data it was

necessary to move through the multiple layers, from macro institutional structures to individual habits and tactics, from the natural environment and the climate to the built features of homes and shops, from the past told in stories and historical traces through the present to the envisaged future, and from the individual to the family and to the community. Although all had different features and structures they did, using Dewey's terminology, form one transactional whole (Dewey & Bentley, 1949). Daily life and ongoing occupation is coherent, understandable, recognisable, and in developing the narrative I wished to tell one way in which occupation may be understood.

The multiple elements of the situation also needed to be explored and described, before and in order to facilitate, the hermeneutic process. The data were coded into categories, which were changed, expanded and renamed to reflect emic conceptualisations. Numerical data was also explored and incorporated in descriptions of the categories, providing additional insights. For example the number of bars, kafeneion and restaurants clearly suggested the importance of the occupations taking place within them.

Member-checking is a strategy through which researchers may try to ensure the trustworthiness of their findings (Curtin & Fossey, 2007). However, I have discussed how the nature of everyday knowledge, largely tacit and taken for granted, made it difficult to engage in direct discussions about it in an abstract way. It has also been suggested that in interpretive research the researcher may introduce to the analytic process theoretical concepts with which the participants are unfamiliar, and as a result they are unable to comment on such interpretations (Cohn & Doyle Lyons, 2003). Therefore I explored ways by which it would be possible to explore and 'check' my emerging understandings and ideas. Throughout the study I recorded numerous descriptions of events and community happenings. Before and after the event it was usually discussed by a number of people with whom I was spending some time, while during the event I usually had the opportunity to observe and participate for myself. Sometimes reports would be conflicting, indicating people's partial knowledge of how events were organised and, or, their own particular view of it. I noted as much detail as I could from as many sources as possible, while maintaining an understanding that in any community there would be multiple understandings of the events that were taking place. At an individual level, as my understandings developed, particularly of what was

important to people, I engaged in a process of checking these ideas. In some cases this was through direct discussion of my emerging findings with a participant, I also sometimes introduced ideas to discussions inviting my ideas to be challenged, and at other times I explored my ideas and understandings through further observation in the town.

Establishing the rigour of method and interpretation are important not only for considering the trustworthiness of the research itself as a piece of academic work, but also are an initial step in considering the transferability or possible applicability of the findings beyond the particular setting of the study (Bailey, 2007). In research which uses a narrative structure to present the findings, this includes both whether the narrative is considered to be plausible and coherent, and overall whether the research is understandable and gives the reader new insights and is useful (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Polkinghorne, 1995; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). I have already discussed the challenges of such research, undertaken in one language and presented in another, where different languages and different discourse within a given language divide up the world and give it meaning in ways that are not reducible to one another (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). In writing the story of occupation in the town, I have engaged in translating the story of one community to another. If criteria for the success of a plot are its coherence and plausibility, what does this mean for a narrative that may be outside the experiences of the audience for who it is intended? How can the findings be presented in such a way as to enable the audience to relate to what they do not know without transforming the experiences of the participants beyond recognition? There are no specific answers to these questions, but they were issues on which I reflected throughout the writing process and of which the reader should also be aware.

I make no claim that the particular town and the people living in it are representative of people and towns elsewhere, the whole study being based in an understanding of the relativity of people's perception of the world. However, I have located the research within theoretical understandings of occupation and I do believe that the understandings of occupation that have emerged have relevance for other situations. I hope that the findings as they are presented in the following chapters will enable such reflections.

This concludes this chapter which discussed in detail the research design, including the methods, data collection, analytic process and ethical issues. Before proceeding to the first of the five chapters that present the findings of this study, I provide a brief introduction to my experience of living in the town.

## **“Living the Town”**

*Thursday is market day in the town. Starting before seven, or so the early risers have told me, it is a pleasure to be there by eight on a spring morning such as this. I enjoy the sense of energy in the town on market day. More people are around than on other weekdays, as people come in from the neighbouring villages to shop in the market and take the opportunity to do other dhouleiés (jobs) as well. I park and make my way through the row of taxis, waiting to take people home with their shopping, to the side street where the market stalls have been erected. The air is full of the scent of jasmine and I admire the climbing rose, covered in deep red flowers, that is in one of the gardens.*

*At the bottom of the street a big lorry with the back open is full of hens in pens. I have never seen anyone buy any and I am not sure if they are sold dead or alive, plucked or not. The sight of them always makes me feel like an ‘Athenian’ – a city dweller unaccustomed to country life. Near to the hens the ‘fish-man’, with his open-sided van displaying the fish in polystyrene boxes full of ice, is in his usual spot at the bottom of the road. I can see a pile of small fish, probably sardines, as well as a few large ones, sea bass and red mullet, and there is a pile of small squid. I make my way to ‘my’ orange man, where I have been buying my oranges since the winter and have come to expect the cheery greeting given to a regular, and the couple of lemons that he adds to*

*my bag unasked. The street is narrow and full of people, and I am quickly frustrated by the number of people pulling their shopping trolleys that block the road as people stop to shop and chat. I see Ioanna and we exchange a quick greeting, she is rushing and breathless, telling me that it is her second trip as she had run out of money and had had to go home to get some more from her husband. The man selling oranges is tipping oranges from a crate onto his long trestle table. Some look as if they are going to fall off and I with another customer field them back to safety, exchanging grins. A woman is asking the trader if the oranges are sweet, "as sweet as anything" he replies. "Well they better be" the woman replies "my husband will kick me out if they're not". We all laugh. She buys five kilos in a big bag and leaves, while I apologise for only wanting two kilos – it seems a small amount compared to most shoppers, who buy from the street market the week's supply of fruit and vegetables.*

*The stalls fill both sides of the narrow road. Some stalls only sell vegetables – cabbages, cauliflowers, spinach, xorta (greens) in piles, others potatoes and onions, while some only sell fruit. There is an old man with a small table in front of him piled high with trays of eggs, and another man with tins of honey. There is also a stall selling pulses and some grain from big plastic containers. Another stall sells plastic bowls, plates, jugs and all sorts of kitchen ware. I wander up to the top of the market where there are some stalls selling clothes and shoes. Two mothers with their toddlers in push chairs are looking at track suits for the children. There are a pile of loose slippers selling for five euros each and I think how those prices will spoil business for Mr. Nikos who has the shoe shop.*

*Finishing shopping I head off towards my car. On the way I pass the square and see Rica sitting at a table with a woman I do not know. She shouts a greeting and calls "come and have a coffee with us". I go over, Rica saying "we won't be long I have to go to the chemists in a while to pick up my Mother's prescription". I think she is giving an excuse for having a coffee so early, before having done all our dhouleiés (jobs/tasks). Quite a few tables are full and it seems other people are doing the same as us. The two women are drinking small cups of Greek coffee and I order the same. I have not seen Rica for a few weeks so I ask her about her mother who is over 90. Rica says she is still managing on her own, though she pops in two or three times a day to see her.*



*She also asks me about universities in the UK for her grandson who is thinking of applying next year.*

*We are sitting half in and half out of the shade – it is that time of the year. The square is almost completely covered with an awning of leaves from the several large plane trees planted in it. It is warm in the sun, the warmth seeps through me, and I can feel my shoulders relax. I become one of the idle observers as I scan the square, the people and their comings and goings. Occasionally something draws my attention more fully: the postman rides his motor bike across the square to deliver letters to an office on the far side; a man walks past selling homemade baskets that I think would be good for gathering xórta (greens); and I see Martha driving in her car along the main road towards her home.*

*We sit chatting idly for about 40 minutes before Rica calls over the girl to pay, refusing to allow me to pay for my coffee, and we get up to carry on with the rest of the morning's dhouleíés.*

## Chapter 4: Understanding Occupation

This is the first of five chapters that present the findings of this study. As discussed in the preceding chapter, occupation in the town will be presented as a narrative. In this and the following chapters the multiple interweaving threads that combine to construct the narrative will be presented, which include setting, characters, action and plot. This first chapter will focus particularly on the action of the narrative, that is, on occupation, and specifically on how occupation came to be understood in this town.

The setting of the narrative, the contextual aspects of daily occupation, will be interwoven throughout these chapters, but also will be the specific focus of the following chapter. Chapters 6-8 present the plots of this narrative. The people of the town are the characters of the narrative and both build and people it through extracts from field notes and vignettes of their experiences. Their words and occupation are presented in italics throughout the following text, and they are briefly introduced in *Appendix D*. My own character is also unavoidably present. Throughout the narrative will be interwoven discussions and opinions from the literature (Polkinghorne, 1995).

### Introducing Occupation

*“It was a warm day in early May. The church clock struck nine as I walked into the upper square. The leaves on the four large trees, one in each corner of the square, were in full leaf. The square was quiet, a few cars outside the town hall. The taverna was shut and the small playground to one side was empty.*

*I opened the door to the Old People’s Day Centre, the KAPI, and found the main room empty. I called out a “Kaliméra” (good morning) and Martha put her head round the door at the back of the room. She was washing the white-tiled floor of the bathroom using a mop and bucket. She cleaned the floor most mornings, before the members arrived.*

*When she had finished she asked me if I would have a coffee and when she said she would join me, I accepted. She suggested I had a cold Nescafé, a frappé, as the weather was getting warmer and I agreed that would be nice. She went into the small kitchen and started to make it. She methodically unwound the cord from the electric hand-held shaker and having put the instant coffee and a small amount of water in the glass, plugged in the shaker, having to stand as the only plug was near the door where there was no work-surface. She kept the shaker in the glass until the water and coffee has turned into four centimetres of thick froth. Unplugging the shaker she then went back to the side of the sink, added cold water from the fridge until the glass was almost full and finally a few drops of evaporated milk from a small tin. She put the glass on a small tray covered with a paper doily, and added a saucer with three milk biscuits, a straw and a glass of water. She talked as she worked, and the whole process seemed to me to be an almost exact repetition of previous occasions when she had made me coffee.*

*The door of the KAPI opened and Mr. Petros came in. He walked with a stick and as he came in he hooked his stick over the coat rack and went to sit down in an armchair at one of the small round coffee tables in front of the television. He had a refined face and a restrained manner, wished us both good morning and asked Martha to make his coffee. She made him a small cup of Greek coffee, knowing how he liked it from previous occasions, and serving it on a small tray as she had prepared for me. Just as she was serving his coffee, the door opened again and Mr. Dimitris arrived, a former employee at the municipality, who greeted us with a slightly flirtatious air and a grin. He sat at the same table as Mr. Petros, who also paid for his coffee when Martha served it. They sat drinking their coffee while watching the morning programmes on the television.*

*Martha suggested I might like to have my coffee outside and I agreed. Martha took the opportunity to smoke a cigarette. Smoking was not allowed inside the KAPI; it was one of the main reasons that the particular men choose to go to the KAPI each morning for their coffee and not to one of the kafeneío. Each kafeneío had its group of regulars; the regulars at the KAPI were the non-smokers. Martha also liked to hide her smoking from the members, although they knew she does; I had heard them teasing her about it on another occasion.*

*We sat on either side of the small, round metal table immediately to the side of the door. The two chairs were metal framed, canvas seated 'directors' chairs and I sank into mine, the table high between us, and I had to sit up to reach my coffee when I wanted to drink some. Martha sat furthest away from the door to hide her cigarette. We just fitted onto the narrow pavement and Martha's car was parked right there in front of us too. I felt as if I was sitting in a parking lot. Another member of the KAPI arrived and Martha went in to prepare and serve his drink.*

*Mrs. Dimitra, 76 years old, came round the corner, leaning heavily on her walking stick. She had a plastic supermarket bag in one hand, full of xórta (greens) with a sharp vegetable knife on top and some plastic gloves. She sat heavily in the chair vacated by Martha. She was wearing a short sleeved cream blouse and a canary yellow sleeveless jumper. She looked bright and spring-like and I commented on it. There were only a small number of the older women in the village who wore bright colours, as most wore the black of a widow. Mrs. Dimitra, although a widow for 20 years, did not. Martha came out and asked her what she could bring her and she asked for a glass of water 'for now' and then a coffee, explaining that she was thirsty from walking. She drank the glass of water fast. Martha sat to join us, having brought out an extra chair from inside that she placed on the edge of the road. This was one of the wooden, cane-seated chairs with an upright back, a traditional chair for the kafeneío. It was old and its joints were loose, so together with the slope of the road Martha ended up perching somewhat precariously on it.*

*Mrs. Dimitra explained how she had decided from the previous evening that she would collect xórta (greens) today. She described her route, "I went up on the top circular road around to St Andreas [an area at the far edge of the village]. I expected Nikos to have plenty of xórta, there at the edge, but there wasn't, and it was hot, but then I thought of Yiannis a bit further on and there was some, not a lot though". I did not know all the fields and people she was referring to. As usual I was surprised and at the same time distanced, by the knowledge the townspeople had of who had what fields where, and Mrs. Dimitra was not a farmer, she had had a shop with her husband.*

*A woman, about the same age as Mrs. Dimitra, dressed all in black, and with a very cheerful expression came round the corner. She lived next door and had been Mrs.*

*Dimitra's neighbour for their entire married lives. She greeted us and immediately commented "Look how she is having her coffee before she has even cleaned the xórta". Martha immediately responded "Never mind, it is hot, it doesn't matter if she sits down for a minute", and asked her if she would drink a coffee with us, which she agreed to.*

I spent this, and many more days like it, engaged in the process of exploring occupation. I lived my days with the daily doings of the townspeople, trying to understand what people did, how and why they did it and what it meant for their health and wellbeing. However, I became aware that my exploration was based on a dualistic view of a goal-setting individual doing discrete, named, spatially and temporally bounded occupations in a separate context. I was focusing on exploring individuals or groups of people doing things that I could describe in the terms of the categories familiar in the descriptions of occupational areas such as self care, productivity, and leisure (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2008; Polatajko et al., 2007). Although I was concerned with the structural, spatial and temporal influences of the context, I viewed them as separate to the individual and occupation. However, what I was experiencing and observing were fluid interactions of numerous people coming together as their daily occupations overlapped, influencing each other's doings in an ongoing process of change and negotiation. In addition, many of these mundane, daily doings originated in or were influenced by macro structures, the physical environment or the climate. For example, Martha was working in the KAPI following a notice of a vacancy for an 18 month part-time contract, with her hours and place of work stipulated by the KAPI's board. Cleaning the floors, what drinks she served and when, and going to sit outside for a cigarette with me, emerged from the demands, needs and physical presence of other people. That we sit on the pavement and not in the main square under the shade of the trees was an indication that it was still early May and the heat was not yet sufficient to drive us to sit in the shade under the tree in the square itself. If Rica, another neighbour, had been there we might have sat in the square itself, as she preferred it there and she tended to do what she wanted. I, on the other hand, was always aware that Martha was working and so presumed, based on my own values related to work and feeling slightly guilty about the time she spent with me, that she preferred to be near the door so that she could easily see and hear the members if they called for her.

I came to understand that daily doings were not separate 'things' done by an individual **in** a separate environment, but were flowing, emergent and flexible across time and space (Kantartzis et al., 2012). The dualities of human and occupation, person and context, are commonly described in occupational science literature (Hocking, 2009). However, as can be seen from the above extract from fieldnotes, while it may be possible to describe separately for the purpose of the investigation the human from the non-human while understanding them as part of a total situation, reifying occupation into a 'thing' and separate from these elements was impossible. Any description of doing inevitably incorporated a number of people and a whole spatial, temporal and social world that extended back, out and forwards from the position of my observation.

As has already been discussed in a preceding chapter, it was during the process of analysis that the work of John Dewey was explored (Dewey, 1922/2007, 1958; Dewey & Bentley, 1949). Within his theoretical framework of transactionalism, occupation could be understood as ongoing and fluid transactions, functionally integrated with the social, spatial and temporal context (Dickie et al., 2006). The idea of the transactional whole, the individual-in-the-world, with all elements interpenetrating, co-constituted and continually changing, added a perspective within which occupation could be understood as a coordinating element maintaining the harmony of the whole (Aldrich, 2008; Cutchin, 2004; Dewey, 1922/2007; Dewey & Bentley, 1949).

## **Occupation as Trans-Action**

As already noted, I increasingly understood from observation, my own embodied experience of participation in the daily life of the town, and later during and as a result of the process of data analysis, that occupation was not an external 'thing', and that this view problematises the conceptualisation of occupation as chunks of activities such as particular hobbies (fishing, cooking) in which people engage (playing, working) (Clark et al., 1991; Yerxa et al., 1989). While it was possible in the town to identify, categorise and name particular observable doings, such as a person attending choir practice, collecting *xorta* (greens), or working in their shop, such labelling provided very little additional information and, problematically, could hide or distort the complexity of

what was happening. An understanding of what was happening required that attention be paid to not only the individual or group involved and their diverse experiences, but together with this all the temporal, spatial and social elements. Additionally, while for the purposes of study these elements might be named and considered individually, they were related transactionally, part of the whole, or, to use the terminology of Dewey and Bentley (1949), were interpenetrating elements of the situation.

Exploring occupation as described at the opening of this chapter necessitated considering: the weather conditions on that specific day but also within the broader seasons and climate; the trees, tables, chairs, slope of the street, white tiled floors, coffee shaker etc.; the drink *frappé* and its cultural significance, work regulations and expectations; the people involved (present and not) and their relationships and knowledge of each other and the setting; together with a multitude of other elements. The intertwining of multiple elements in occupation was evident at all levels of the situation, from the embodied experience of drinking a *frappé* while sitting on too low canvas chairs, to macro socio-economic and political factors that led to the establishment of the KAPI.

This understanding of occupation approaches the understanding of occupational performance or occupational engagement discussed in the literature (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2008; Law et al., 1997; Polatajko et al., 2007). Within these theoretical frameworks the occupation, individual and environment come together to produce the particular occupational performance and engagement. Occupation is presented as one of the elements of occupational performance, indicating a more static and external to the individual understanding of occupation itself. This conceptualisation of occupation as having two elements, one a more static external form and the other an active doing of the form was most explicitly developed in the work of Nelson (1988). Pierce (2001b) approached this dualism by suggesting that the external, culturally recognized form of occupation be referred to as activity, and the actual doing of the activity in real time and place be referred to as occupation.

Occupation as part of the transactional relationship of person and context moves beyond these positions, rejecting the dualisms of occupation and occupational performance, and activity and occupation. The idea of occupation is inseparable from

the doing of occupation, as the individual doing is inseparable from the context with which he or she is doing.

Before exploring more fully the transactional perspective of occupation, it is useful to develop this critique of the existing understandings of occupation that emerged from the exploration of daily activity in this town. It is perhaps more usual to present the findings of a study first, before critiquing existing theory. However, the approach taken here in some way mirrors my own exploration of occupation as I lived in the town and reflected on my own preconceptions based in the existing English-language and Western located literature. This exploration will also provide the foundations for the emerging understanding of occupation in this town discussed in continuation.

## **Problematizing Current Understandings of Occupation**

Considering occupation within a transactional perspective problematizes certain understandings of occupation commonly presented in the literature, and particularly those which place occupation as an external object or thing, occupation as 'chunks of activity' and occupation as the product of an individual agent.

### **Occupation as an external object.**

When occupation is described as an external object or thing, for example 'shopping', a certain structure is applied, and certain elements must be present for it to be confirmed as 'shopping'. This confirmation of an occupation is usually considered to be a cultural process resulting from the common recognition of the form of the occupation within a particular cultural group. This is evident in definitions of occupation from occupational science where occupation has been referred to as 'chunks' of activity labelled by the culture (Clark et al., 1991; Yerxa, Frank et al., 1990), and in occupational therapy in such widely cited definitions as this from the Canadian Association: "occupation refers to groups of activities and tasks of everyday life, named, organised and given value and meaning by individuals and a culture" (Law et al., 1997, p. 34). It is understood that the individual enters or engages with this form when performing a particular occupation



and it has been suggested that exploration of such forms is a valuable direction for research (Hocking, 2009).

The focus here is not on the conflicting use of the terms occupation and occupational performance, but the consequences of seeing occupation as in some way related to a described and bounded form with a certain amount of structural rigidity. Observed occupation in the town was almost always difficult to categorise in this way, a difficulty confirmed during early data analysis. One original research question had focused on 'what do people do?' for which I had anticipated the naming of certain objective doings as described earlier, such as work and named hobbies. As I observed and started to create categories for the coding of the data, I discovered that it was not always possible to frame sections of activity into discrete chunks named in the culture (Clark et al., 1991). It was also, and more importantly, rarely sufficient to identify a single name for the complexity that was taking place. I changed the coding category to 'what is done', which enabled me to look beyond named activities of particular individuals to look at all the various doings that were going on in a particular situation.

An example can be provided by exploring what took place within a shop. A commonly discussed occupation in the literature is to go shopping, referring to an individual engaged in purchasing something that he or she requires from a particular place. However, when shopping was observed, a complex process was revealed. Shopping always involved directly two people as both a customer and a shop keeper were present. The purchase of an item entailed a delicate balancing of often conflicting interests as the shop keeper desired to sell certain items or to make a good profit and the shopper was looking for something in particular, or most fresh or at a good price. The type and quantity of purchases might also be discussed, revealing that this shopping was part of a process whereby the customer, for example, was preparing for a visit by family members or fixing something that was broken in the home.

At the same time the particular instance of shopping was an ongoing phase in a relationship between shopkeeper and customer with memories of both previous conflicts and successful purchases. In addition, both people were part of broader social networks. People rarely shopped from someone to whom they were not in some way connected: *"I go in turn to all three butchers; one is a neighbour, one was a class mate*

*of my son and one is a distant cousin*", said Mrs Ketty one morning, explaining the way she delicately balanced her social connections through her shopping practices. In other cases people held multiple roles in the town. For example the President of the Folk Lore Association owned one of the bakeries; a woman who owned one of the clothes shops was elected onto the town council and the President of the Hunting Association owned one of the cafés. Business related to these other activities was often discussed with customers. Shopping was also the time to hear the daily news, as customers came and went and discussed the day's happenings, while for some women it was only time they left their home during the day and they dressed smartly and wore makeup to go to buy the bread.

Given the complexity of the process it is difficult to maintain that naming the process 'shopping', facilitates understanding of this complexity and the interweaving of the elements. As well as being a co-occupation (Davel Pickens & Pizur-Barnekow, 2009) incorporating both customer and shop keeper, the social relationship involved may be more important than the purchase, and while two individuals are involved at the point of time of the purchase numerous other relations and roles are intertwined. Additionally, what took place between customer and shopkeeper may be of far less significance than a chance meeting that took place as the customer left the shop.

When occupation is understood to have an external structure specific temporal and spatial boundaries are constructed. It has been suggested that the essence of 'an' occupation incorporates a temporal beginning, middle and end (McLaughlin Gray, 1997). However, as the opening extract demonstrates, spatial and temporal boundaries were seen to be fluid, requiring, as Dewey described, seeing things extensionally and durationally (Dewey & Bentley, 1949, p. 120).

Taking for exploration Mrs. Dimitra's *xórta* gathering, while it is possible to artificially identify a beginning and end, for example from the moment Mrs. Dimitra left her house to collect *xórta* to the moment she returned, this is for the convenience of observation and description rather than a complete understanding of the event. At a minimum it is necessary to consider the previous day's planning, while for a more complete understanding of the entire situation it is necessary to explore the history of collecting *xórta* both for Mrs. Dimitra and her friends and neighbours, incorporating ideas, for

example, of nutrition and exercise, together with the embodied experience of the natural environment, while projecting into the future the process of preparation and waste disposal, cooking, eating, her recounting of the event to neighbours and family, and the next occasion of gathering *xórta*. Spatially the event also extended beyond the path actually taken by Mrs. Dimitra to include those fields she knew of, but chose not to visit that day, her home and the facilities she had available to prepare *xórta*, and also incorporated the KAPI, the facilities of which she used in her own particular way to satisfy her needs at that time. Rather than exploring the static form of picking *xórta*, understanding Mrs. Dimitra's occupation that day requires an understanding of "nature and our experience of it is a continuous flow of unfolding processes" (Cutchin 2008, p. 1560), part of a continuity without artificial boundaries marking beginning and end. It also requires an understanding of her occupational literacy: "the store of tacit knowledge, of shared vernacular practices, which enables people to work out how to do things" (Pollard & Sakellariou, 2012c, p. 49).

Fluid temporal and spatial boundaries were experienced at an individual level as in the previous example of collecting *xórta*, however the macro, structural level also supported this fluidity. The town was a largely agricultural community with many self-employed farmers and shop owners. The nature of both farming and of self-employment loosens the tight temporal framework of industrialisation with its set working hours. The sharp division between work and family time imposed on many workers is replaced by the possibility of flexibility and responsiveness to demands arising from multiple sources (Lefebvre, 1958/2008). Spatially, many people lived over, next door to, or within walking distance of their work. Additionally there were few privatised leisure activities for adults imposing their own spatial and temporal structures and the members of the few organised groups (e.g. choir and folk dancing) negotiated their meeting times from year to year. Imposing dualities of production and leisure, friends and colleagues, relaxation and hard work ignores the flexibility and intertwining of space, place and social relationships observed (Kantartzis et al., 2012).

### **Occupation as "chunks of activity."**

Occupation has been defined as "chunks of activities" (Yerxa et al., 1989, p. 5), and a hierarchical relationship with activities and tasks is frequently described with

occupation as the broadest, overarching level (Polatajko et al., 2007). This may be due to a need to look for stability and fixed relationships (Brea et al., 2012), but implies that occupation is in some way 'bigger' or more substantial and also with more meaning than a more simple activity. However, it was observed that this failed to acknowledge that often short or simple events were significant within the ongoing stream of daily occupation, as the following extract illustrates.

*One day when I visited the KAPI I found six of the elderly male members gathered around a table, watching Martha playing cards with one man. The members often played cards but this was the first time I had seen Martha join in. The atmosphere was charged with energy as Martha and the man were playing fast, slapping the cards down, calling out the names as demanded, and teasing each other as to who was likely to win. The other members present were gathered closely around the table, taking sides and calling out encouragement.*

They played for about half an hour. As I mentioned, card playing was an ongoing activity, but only this game was later referred to on several occasions, as it had acquired significance and become memorable, as a fun, energy-filled occasion.

Other events were significant because they changed the flow of occupation, as in the following incidents: *One day Makis stopped me as I was walking to the supermarket by flashing the headlights of his car. He invited me to join him for a coffee, which later turned into lunch with a group of friends. On another occasion, one summer evening I was sitting with Themistoklis, an electrician, when he received a phone call from a farmer that the electricity supply to his drying ovens for the tobacco leaves had failed. Even though it was eleven o'clock Themistoklis left his group of friends and set off, saying "You can't really leave someone when their year's crop is in danger".*

Waving, hooting a car horn, flashing headlights, shouting across the street and tapping on a shop window were all used to attract attention. They led to messages being passed on, arrangements made, jokes and news told. They often led to a change in the ongoing flow of occupation or a change in mood positively or negatively depending on the exchange. Telephone calls acted in a similar way, permitting communication with persons at a distance throughout the day and night.

In many of the theoretical discussions regarding the classification of occupation, activity and task, waving to someone would not be classified as occupation. However if occupation is understood to be important in enabling the maintenance of balance of all elements of the situation, the significance of these types of activity becomes clear. They give energy, opportunities for the experience of power and control, and establish and maintain relationships. They may change the direction or purpose of occupation and may be an important element in the overall composition of the day or week.

### **Occupation as the product of an individual agent.**

As has been discussed, occupational therapy and occupational science have a predominantly individualistic perspective. Occupation is seen as the powerful process of the self-directed individual, engaged in self-initiated occupation under conscious control (McLaughlin Gray, 1997; Yerxa, 2000). Individuals are seen to be able to seize opportunities, shape their own future, reach their own targets (D.L. Nelson, 1996; Reilly, 1962), take charge of their lives and become masters of their environment (Yerxa, 1993).

As discussed, in the town I experienced difficulty in appointing a central individual agent as author of particular activities or occupations. A woman might decide to go to shop for food for lunch, but was preparing lunch for a hungry husband and children rather than herself (as many commented). What she decided to cook might depend on what she knew her children or husband liked, or was available in the butchers, fishmonger or supermarket (changing according to season and also with day to day quality), or on her friend who she had bumped into on the street and had suggested a particular dish.

The complex causality of occupation beyond that of individual volition or motivation also emerged during the process of data analysis. Regarding the question 'why does the person do this/these activities?' I had anticipated finding the majority of experiences or activities described as "because I enjoy it", or "because I have to", or 'it is important to me because...', a self-centered explanation of motivation that I had anticipated would also link to the powerful notion of meaning found in the literature (Hasselkus, 2002). However, more frequently I found I was recording a mass of other 'causes',

such as the weather, the seasons, administrative procedures, and demands of family members. All were motivations inseparable from the person in their environment, and while it could be said that it was the individual who acted, the causes of that action emerged from the context as a whole (Dewey, 1922/2007).

Observations in this town therefore agreed with those who have challenged the dominant individual focus of the theoretical discussions of occupation (Dickie et al., 2006; Fogelberg & Frauworth, 2010; Iwama, 2006; Kirby, 2013). While people were certainly not passive performers of social roles, neither were they self-centered and bounded individuals controlling an external environment.

In addition to the complex causation of occupation, many occupations were not performed entirely by one individual but rather by either a pair in complementary roles or by two or more people doing together either simultaneously or over a period of time. Co-occupation has been discussed in the literature and defined in a number of ways. Pierce (2009, p. 203) defined it as “a dance between the occupations of one individual and another that sequentially shapes the occupations of both persons”. Pierce’s understanding of co-occupation maintains the focus on the individual as she describes two individuals, each engaged in occupation, and she defends the importance of maintaining the focus on the individual. Much of observed occupation in the town was closer to Davel Pickens and Pizur-Barenkow’s definition of co-occupation (2009, p. 155) as occurring “when two or more individuals engage in an occupation which becomes transformed by aspects of shared physicality, shared emotionality, and shared intentionality”. Using the example of shopping discussed earlier, while shopping can be explored from the perspective of only the customer, exploring shopping as a co-occupation in which both customer and shop-keeper are significant, permits greater depth and breadth of understanding. The majority of occupation in the town involved more than one person as people ate and drank together, paid bills and tax, had health checks, and chatted across their balconies. However, again it is important that the focus does not remain primarily on the people involved in the occupation and by doing so ignore other important elements of the multi-faceted situation. For example, returning again to the situation of shopping, the primary element in the situation on one occasion that I observed, was that the farmers were again on strike, blocking the

national highways with their tractors, and preventing tomatoes, brought from Crete, from reaching the shop.

Another form of shared doing that was observed was doing together over time. Examples included the combined occupation of parents and grandparents in the care of small children, two brothers who maintained a flock of sheep (working alternate shifts), and two employees working alternate shifts at the museum. These combined occupations required coordination and cooperation as all those involved worked to fulfil the demands of the particular situation.

Occupation was therefore observed as interwoven doing with others within a total situation. This challenges both the idea of the individual as the primary casual agent but also the individual as unique actor. Having explored some of the observed aspects of occupation in the town that raised questions in relation to existing theoretical understandings, it is now possible to consider in greater detail how occupation came to be understood in this town.

## **Occupation as Process**

Some initial understandings of the nature of occupation in the town were explored within the preceding critical discussion of the existing conceptualisation of occupation. The understanding of occupation that is emerging is of a process that is fluid through time and space, and which flexibly coordinates the multiple dimensions of the situation as a whole. The situation incorporates the individual and all the elements of the spatial, temporal and social context in which he or she is situated. All elements are continually changing and occupation is important in maintaining the balance between them.

This understanding reduces the significance given in current theory to the doing of specific, named occupations, but gives a much greater significance to all aspects of a person's doing in the world, as through this doing the individual and contextual harmony is maintained. Maintaining the balance within the total situation may be understood as maintaining daily life which is usual. What is usual is a tacitly held

practical knowledge that the people within the situation mutually share (Giddens, 1984), often described in Greek as *h kathimerinótita* (the everyday). Therefore it becomes necessary to explore the idea of the total situation that includes individual and context, and the nature and function of occupation as an integral part of that situation. As indicated, a transactional perspective will be used to facilitate exploration of these elements.

The context, whether that was the family, friends or neighbours of the individual, their home and the physical environment of the town and its surrounds, the changing seasons, the bureaucracy of central government and the global and national economic crisis, were an integral part of the ongoing occupation of the individual. The transactional perspective moves beyond the idea of the context influencing the individual and their occupation and suggests that all elements co-constitute one another (Dewey, 1922/2007).

The situation is the term Dewey used to describe the whole, which can be separated into components for the purpose of study, for example, the person, the physical environment, social institutions etc., but which should be understood to be one continuous entity (Dewey & Bentley, 1949). As has been discussed, Dewey described as characteristic of the situation that all elements are continually changing, dynamic and precarious (Cutchin, 1999), although change will occur at different rates. In the town the geographical events which produced the mountain range change at a rate much slower than the gradual decay of some of the town's empty homes, again much slower than a bureaucratic decision to stop buses to the neighbouring town on a Wednesday. However, all elements are changing and therefore the individual and environment are necessarily in an ever-evolving relational process (Emirbayer, 1997).

In the transactional literature within occupational science (Dickie et al., 2006, p. 91) occupation is discussed as a "type of transactional relation...an important mode through which human beings, as organisms-in-environment-as-a-whole, function in their complex totality". This view of occupation supports observations in the town that occupation was a fluid, emerging process intertwined with context and individual. The ongoing flux, contingency and uncertainty of ongoing experience (Cutchin & Dickie,



2012) demanded that occupation be an ongoing process that coordinated individual and context in order to achieve the best possible ongoing outcomes.

With this understanding the aim of occupation cannot be said to be located within the individual and to precede the beginning of 'an' occupation. There is no temporal or spatial point at which the individual is outside of the situation and is not involved in occupation, supporting Pollard and Sakellariou's (2012a, p. 57) question of whether "doing' is a constant state". Therefore it is not possible for the individual to set, in isolation, discrete aims. Such a perception is only possible when occupation is understood to be named chunks of activity, such as playing football, and where the individual is perceived to be in a dualistic relationship with the context. Only with such a perspective is each separate individual able to choose occupations from an ongoing place of non-occupation.

The understood nature of occupation in this town, supported by the transactional perspective, presents a different viewpoint. If the individual is always of the situation, aims are also always of the situation. Using the example of football, football is part of the total situation, there before the individual was even born and part of his or her habitual world of childhood and growing up. Previous Saturday afternoons playing football with friends, a long week working in an enclosed office, and a telephone call from a team mate, come to be a desire for football as a solution to *ksepsáso* (break out/relieve tension – mental and physical) on a particular day. These various happenings and developments are interwoven and contingent (Aldrich, 2008).

The difficulty of using the word aim to describe the direction of occupation is becoming apparent, with its connection to a linear process driven by an individual. Dewey (1922/2007) suggested that the ongoing contingency of the elements of the situation means that aims are never final ends, but rather can be described as ends-in-view. This term supports the idea of an overall direction but also that constant adjustment of ends-in-view occurs as the individual moves through the constantly changing context (Aldrich, 2008; Dewey, 1922/2007). While we may start with ends-in-view they are fluid and change during the process, serving as guides to the process rather than specific outcomes (Garrison 2001).

As an ongoing process it can be seen that occupation was not bounded spatially, temporally or socially. This was already illustrated in the description of Mrs Dimitra collecting *xórta*. It can be seen that although certain occupation is described as having particular features, for example, playing football and collecting *xórta*, these ideas of occupation emerge from the total context, are incorporated into the ongoing process of occupation as ends-in-view, intermingle and overlap spatially and temporally with other ends-in-view which may be concurrent, precede and will follow.

Dewey (1922/2007) described the harmony of the total situation as the ongoing result of the successful coordination of the various elements. Harmony in the town was understood to relate to the maintenance of the taken-for-granted or usual daily life. The particular characteristics of this for the people of this town will be discussed through the plots, presented in Chapters 6-8. However, on a day to day basis, and consistent with the idea of aims-in-view, rather than the successful completion of a number of bounded, named, occupations, it could be seen how usual daily life was made up of conflicting purposes, needs and obligations that were cut short and extended, introduced and abandoned, as required. Attention to personal needs at one point in the day might balance extended periods of time spent caring for others. Several days of repetitive mundane occupation were balanced by events and celebrations offering opportunities for change and heightened emotion. An unexpected argument with a family member might spoil an evening out which was usually enjoyable and lead to a change in anticipated needs for occupation the following day. Several days spent inside due to bad weather were relieved by a long walk or time in the square on the first sunny day. A particularly physically tiring day at work required a longer period of rest to recover. Occupation as process, links to ideas that people orchestrate or compose their lives (Bateson, 1996; Clark et al., 1991), an idea that has been taken up in the occupational science literature (e.g. Doble & Santha, 2008). However, the observed occupational process in this town, was less an individual, conscious process than that described in the literature. Here it was a largely tacit, unconscious and multi-faceted process that worked to coordinate the multiple elements of the situation.

However, coordination of the elements to maintain the usual does not imply that this was always satisfactory for all people. Outcomes varied and were more or less successful depending on the criteria employed. What was usual, tacitly accepted,

included aspects that in other situations might be considered unsuccessful, or not the norm. Examples of less successful coordination include: depression in the isolated elderly; occupational deprivation of unemployed housewives; closing businesses and unemployment; pollution of the river from the farmers' fertilizers. Some of these issues will be explored further in the following chapters.

Having discussed broadly the understanding of occupation that emerged in this study, further important elements of this process will now be explored. These relate to the nature of individual action, occupation in relation to choice, occupation and issues of power, and finally a discussion of the idea of balance as it emerged in occupation in the town.

### **The nature of action.**

As has been discussed, occupation in the town came to be understood as part of a complex transaction involving multiple elements of the situation. Each event or action could emerge as a result of multiple and interrelated climatic, spatial, social and individual factors within an historical trajectory. This understanding is supported by Dewey's view that "the origins of action are not from within: they arise from the constantly emerging relations that bind the person and the world" (Cutchin, 2008, p. 1562). Therefore, it is useful to explore further what is the nature of the individual's action in the process of occupation.

Indications of a largely tacit or practical knowledge about much of daily life emerged during the first few months of the research process, supported by the theoretical underpinnings of the study already discussed in preceding chapters (e.g. Bourdieu, 1972/ 1977; Giddens, 1984). I recognised that much of everyday occupation took place within a commonly shared understanding of what was the right, normal or usual way things should be done or how they should be. Both Dewey's exploration of habits and Bourdieu's concept of habitus support this view, seeing action as predominantly habitual, a disposition to act that incorporates behaviours, desires, attitudes and morals (Bourdieu, 1972/ 1977; Cutchin et al., 2008; Dewey, 1922/2007).

Due to their tacit nature habits were rarely identified and discussed directly, but were understandable within the ongoing stream of occupation. However, the following excerpt from the field notes illustrates one woman's awareness of her embodied experience of growing up in the town and the sense she had of 'fitting-in' to that context:

*One day I was talking to Sophia, a fit 60 year old. We were standing in the garden of her house, a short distance out of the town. The mountain was towering over our heads, it was a late spring day and the sky was a cloudless blue, while the smell of wisteria, honeysuckle and early roses filled the air. Beyond her fence the fields were still green from the winter rains, tinged with a carpet of daisies and chamomile. Our senses were already telling us what we were talking about, which was about why she had returned to live in the town when she retired. She eloquently expressed the richness of her sensory experiences of growing up in the village, saying:*

*"I belong to the village, I know every stone. When I go to the gymnasium (school) I feel that it is mine..., when I go to vote [which happens in the school building] I feel as if I am going to somewhere I belong. And I have played everywhere in the village, I know every stone. Even though you are very young, but children know everything, see everything, they live it all. With my friends we used to take the path from the village and in half an hour be here, and we would lie in the fields and eat fresh the broad beans and the green beans, and we would lie in the grass, didn't even think about snakes, so that the workers wouldn't see us. And singing. And we would go to the station 'What shall we do? Let's walk to the station', and Athens was like another world. And we walked up the path to the monastery, half an hour up the mountain, to drink some water from the cup that the nuns left. Exo yumnási to sóma mou se aftó to xorió (I have exercised my body in this village)". She repeated this phrase a couple more times as she indicated her body's form by running her hands up and down her sides. She says how she had realised that the village was more than the people...she knew it all, "it is part of me and I belong here".*

*She carried on telling me about one of her favourite books written by a local man. She liked it because it was about this area that she loved, because he wrote about the names of all the places and how they came to be named in the way they were, and that was something she had lived and remembers.*

*She chose to live outside the village so she could be in nature; she wanted space not the four walls of an apartment. She knew this spot where she built her house, this is where they came to thresh the corn; she had spent time here walking the threshing floor. And she told me she was happy; there were always things to do in the garden and like the villagers according to the time of year you did different things: collecting xórta, collecting chamomile, picking anemones and other spring flowers, finding wild asparagus. And she loved the mountain - she spent her summers there as a child and teenager. "I may not love the villagers but I love the mountain".*

While recognising the significance of the context on her self, even in the physical development of her own body, Sofia also clearly demonstrated that this had not prevented her from making choices, both on a day to day basis as seasons changed and different plants grew in nature, but also in that she had chosen to live in Athens for most of her adult life. This again reflects Dewey's discussion of habits, where he acknowledged that although the individual is born in a particular world in transaction with which he or she develops particular ways of living, the individual also has the possibility of awareness, reflection and creative action (Dewey, 1922/2007). Habitual action while underpinning much of everyday occupation was not always sufficient in the indeterminate situation, an emerging force for action and thought (Cutchin & Dickie, 2013). Sophia, brought up in the town but of above average intellectual ability, was able to enter higher education and move to Athens, developing new habitual skills, attitudes, behaviours and morals for that situation, and which afforded her greater harmony in the transactional relationship with her context.

To summarise, it is understood that individuals are born into a situation, into circumstances not of their own making (Ricoeur, 1984), in a world of which they can only be partially aware (Gadamer, 1975/2004), that influence their habitual action and their values and beliefs. Occupation largely emerges through practical knowledge of how to interpret and engage with the world, which may be only partially recognized and reflected on. However, the situation and the people in it are part of an ongoing temporal process leading to growth, change and development, that is, to multiple possibilities (Boisvert, 1998). This means that while much occupation is habitual, people may also reflect on their occupation and therefore have responsibility towards the way they act.

## **Occupation, choice and morality.**

Reflecting on occupation and change, involves choice, to do something or not to do it, to do one of two or more possible things. Choice requires attaching value to possible outcomes or particular actions. The process of people choosing action involves moral choices between what is good and bad, desirable and undesirable, an understanding that this action is more valuable than that action.

The moral hierarchy that is therefore part of all occupation is integral to the situation and part of the tacit knowledge underpinning people's actions. It is part of the social fabric, recognisable and readable by other persons involved within the situation (Ricoeur, 1991). In the town moral issues were evident both tacitly in action and publicly in discussions. In action they were evident through the individual, familial and social activities in which people engaged and continued to engage. Values attached to activities were evident in disputes, arguments, passivity, and embarrassment, as well as in the ongoing every day doing that people engaged in without comment. Moral issues were evident through specific discussions of ethical issues of concern such as corruption and bribery, keeping the law, family morals, as well as the day to day gossiping and analysis of the minutiae of everyday life.

Certain actions and their outcomes were preferred, that is, given higher social value, while the particular circumstances would determine which was perceived to be the most useful, satisfying or possible at that time. Individuals transacted with their environment towards or against those values, but not in ignorance of them. Throughout the day, and from day to day and week to week, people were faced with conflicting demands and therefore conflicting values. They worked to balance these, either at a specific moment, or over a period of time, in order to maintain an overall balance and what they perceived to be usual everyday life.

## **Occupation and power.**

Although it has been discussed that occupation is important in the functional coordination of the situation, this is not to suggest homogeneity of interests. Dewey noted that power is present in all elements of the situation, in the inherent pressure of

each element for manifestation (Dewey, 1922/2007). Ongoing coordination, as the term implies, requires coordination of these multiple and diverse powers. However, occupation as an active process also implies change, a new configuration of the elements and the relationship between them. Power was observed in this process, in multiple ways and at multiple dimensions.

At the macro level of the community the authority to regulate resources was inherent in certain positions, such as the local government officials who decided on local contracts and the notary public who regulated inheritance and sales of property. Public control was officially in the hands of the police and unofficially also regulated by the watchful older men. Priests were awarded respect and also authority over the interpretation of the spiritual world and given the power to mediate between the spiritual and everyday world. Situated within the wider Greek hierarchical society the power to buy and to control was re-established on a daily basis, contested and based as much on personal relationships as the official decision making processes. Elaborate rituals supported the authority of the local municipal officials as they officiated at local meetings and events.

For all the population the possibilities for occupation (Laliberte Rudman, 2010) were mediated by the individual's gender, age, education, role (parent/child) and membership of particular social/familial and national groups as influenced by macro systems and structures and supported by the ongoing habitual occupation of the townspeople. These influenced what was seen to be appropriate and moral for the particular individual to do.

Within families the distribution of resources was used to control behaviour due to the day to day financial dependence of many women and even adult children on the male/father earner and the expected inheritance of property. It was hinted that physical power was also used; I was told that some men '*even hit their wives*'. In other families ongoing arguments led to eventual resigned tolerance, as one woman declared: '*I couldn't take it anymore, so I just stopped talking*'. A large part of the authority of the older farming families was based on their financial independence ("*nobody owns us*"), their involvement in local decision making processes through local politics, and their extended web of family connections providing immediate access to people with required skills and knowledge. National and international processes also exerted a

powerful influence on daily life during the study, particularly with the change of administrative boundaries via the Kallikratis Law in 2010 (see Chapter 8), and the emerging economic crisis.

The process of occupation also offered means of resistance. At a community level the Kallikratis Law changing municipal boundaries, led the townspeople to go to Athens to demonstrate outside the relevant Ministry buildings and to close the national rail line just outside the town for an afternoon. On a micro level, women sought work opportunities in order that they could earn a salary and so lessen their dependence on their husbands. When I asked them why they wanted to work, several women put out their hand in a begging gesture and replied “*so I don't have to do that anymore*”. Some men actively tried to prevent their wives from working in order to maintain their power.

Occupation was used at a mundane and daily level in order for the individual to maintain some sense of control and choice within the situation (Stadnyk et al., 2011). This was often at the level of a tactic (de Certeau, 1984), a manipulation of events to turn them into an opportunity, a small act of resistance such as not buying an item requested by a mother in law, delaying returning home for lunch, or a brush left propped up to “*show I have been working if anyone comes in*”. Tactics were finely tuned to the moment and place of the situation, and might be as fleeting as the physical movements and positioning of a taverna owner to contain a customer who was trying to impress his companions at the owner's expense, or a quick joke that changed near offence to laughter.

Power was also evident in the ongoing influence of occupation over the natural environment. In many instances this was a harmonious process, as the people's long term relationship with the land provided them with the habitual knowledge of caring for the environment with which their survival was intimately connected. However, it could also be a destructive process, for example, the ongoing dumping of building waste and rubble in non-designated places, the pollution of the river with chemical fertilizers, and the unregulated digging out of the river bed for shale for private profit.

While power is usually discussed as operating in social relations (Laliberte Rudman & Huot, 2013) the importance of the physical power of nature was also ever present in



the town and occupation was important in attempts to withstand its force. This was seen in occupation to protect crops against extreme weather conditions and people against weather-induced trauma or illness, and the general way occupation changed according to the season. These issues of power will be evident and discussed throughout the following chapters.

### **Maintaining Balance.**

As will be discussed in the following chapters an important function of occupation as understood in this town was to maintain balance between all the elements of the situation. Balance has been an important aspect of discussions of occupation since the founding of the occupational therapy profession and continues in contemporary literature. Originally focusing on a balanced regime of work, play, rest and sleep (Meyer, 1922/1977), contemporary literature explores a broader understanding that includes a subjective experience of harmony or congruence across a person's occupation (Anaby, Backman, & Jarus, 2010), including achieving balance over the use of the individual's capabilities and resources (Westhorp, 2003). Jonsson and Persson (2006), developing work on flow, specifically explored the relationship between exacting, calming and flowing experiences of occupation. Finally, an overview by Backman (2011) explored a wide variety of individual, occupational and environmental factors that contributed to occupational balance. Characteristic of all these approaches is the focus on the individual occupational experience and the importance of the conscious engagement of the individual in processes of balance.

In the town balance was seen to be within and between the needs of the individual and the context, an ongoing process of ensuring a good-enough fit between the elements of the situation. Occupation was central to balance, as the flexible changing process of occupation enabled the individual to balance the satisfaction of conflicting individual needs, with the balance of family needs (both as a whole and those of individual members), within the wider context. A transactional understanding of occupation facilitates appreciation of the complex whole that both influences but also is the location of balance.

## Summary

This chapter has focused on an emerging understanding of occupation as a process that flexibly coordinates the multiple elements of the situation as a whole. The understanding of occupation presented was supported by the transactional perspective of Dewey and as discussed within the occupational science literature (Aldrich, 2008; Cutchin, 2004; Dewey, 1922/2007; Dewey & Bentley, 1949; Dickie et al., 2006). Daily life was made up of conflicting purposes, needs and obligations as the contingent elements of the situation were in a continual process of change. Occupation was the process that coordinated or balanced the situation, through both people's ongoing habitual ways of doing, but also through shifts and change, moment by moment and also over periods of time. Through occupation the people of the town endeavoured to maintain a life that they perceived as normal, taken-for-granted or usual. This taken-for-granted life included understandings of what was valued in life, what was worth working and struggling to maintain, notions that are discussed within the plots of this narrative of occupation in following chapters.

Balance is a common thread running through this narrative of occupation in the town. Occupation as a process maintained balance within the situation as a whole, as introduced in this chapter, and this idea will be further developed in the following chapters. Chapter 6 focuses on the person. Balance is part of the person's understanding of his or her place in the universe, the degree of efficacy which is experienced and the causality of nature, fate and the place of religious belief. A need for balance is also experienced between the body and soul, understood to be in unity with each other and with the world around. Chapter 7 considers the individual and the family, with the family as a central ideological and practical unit within which the individual is inextricably related. The family is a place of tension and conflict as well as of security and nurturing, requiring a balance between all members demands and needs, while at the same time each individual balances the collective needs and the needs of others with their own individual needs. The final chapter moves further out from the family to consider the maintenance of the social fabric, the community. Community, wider society, family and individual are also engaged in an ongoing balancing of their relationships through the processes of occupation.

Before moving on to these discussions the following chapter presents in more detail the situation, that is, the total context of this study. In the narrative of occupation that is presented in these chapters, the situation is the setting of the story, an inextricable part of the storyline, reflecting Dewey's idea of the situation as a whole and the transactional relation between all elements.

## **Chapter 5: The Situation**

The preceding chapter explored the particular form of occupation in this town. An understanding of occupation emerged as a transactional process, ongoing and fluid, that maintained the ongoing balance of the multiple elements of the entire context, both human and environment, that made up everyday life in the town. As has been discussed, a transactional perspective places all elements as contingent and part of one whole. Dewey and Bentley (1949) proposed that when investigating any object or individual, the word situation be used to refer to the whole of which the object or individual is part, and which therefore should be part of the investigation. In this study, where the object under investigation was occupation in the town of Melissa, the situation included occupation and all the aspects of the individual, the community and the contexts which were related with it, and a discussion of these is the focus of this chapter.

### **Introducing the Situation**

As discussed in Chapter 3, a specific temporal and spatial framework was selected for the study, focusing on a discrete 30 month period in a particular place. My observations and experiences of living in the town deepened my initial theoretical understanding that the focus on this bounded place and time was a convenient research tool rather than a reflection of reality. Observed occupation was a moment in the ongoing temporal flow of people's lives and they physically moved in and out of the town on a daily basis, while places and people as far away as Australia were significant for some. In addition global socio-economic change influenced occupation in the town as the economic crisis developed in Greece.

Therefore discussion of the situation, while mainly focusing on the local and immediate elements, will also consider some of these extended elements, recognising that the boundaries of the situation were tentative and cannot be clearly delimited. Also, the situation was not static as all elements were in a continual process of change (Dewey & Bentley, 1949), including some quite major changes during the 30 months I spent in the town, and since I left, almost two years ago. It is with these parameters in mind that I will explore the situation. In addition, while specific elements of the situation will be named and explored as separate entities it is understood that they are essentially a united whole.

### **The elements of the situation.**

That space and time are socially constructed and integrally bound up with the activities of people has been discussed since the work of Lefebvre (1958/2008) and later Foucault, Bourdieu and the structuration theory of Giddens (Pred, 1984). Within the occupational therapy literature the environment, composed of physical but also social, cultural and institutional elements, has always been seen as important in both constraining and facilitating occupation, while occupation is seen to have an important role in organising time (Kielhofner, 2008; Law, 1996; Townsend, 1997a). These models have tended, however, to maintain the central agency of the individual in relation to a separate environment (Dickie et al., 2006; Iwama, 2006). Occupational science has also explored the contextual aspects of occupation, including our understandings of time (Yalmambirra, 2000), the temporal patterns of occupation (e.g. E. Larson & Zemke, 2003; Yalmambirra, 2000), the relationship between occupation and place (e.g. Hamilton, 2011; Rowles, 2008; Townsend, Dale Stone et al., 2009), and relating time and space as integral to occupation (Zemke, 2004). The recent discussions on occupational justice and the related notions of occupational deprivation, alienation, imbalance and marginalisation focus specifically on the impact of structural factors on occupational outcomes (Stadnyk et al., 2011; Whiteford, 2011). These discussions have developed critical understandings of the impact of social, temporal and spatial elements on the possibilities for and nature of occupation, while the emerging transactional perspective has provided further theoretical insights regarding the relationship between the elements of the situation.

Exploring the situation, therefore inevitably includes exploration of the spatial, temporal and social, as a triad which together structure and are structured by daily life (Soja, 1989). Space, the physical landscape, shapes but also is shaped by the activities unfolding within it through time. Geographical spaces become places with form and meaning (Gieryn, 2000). Time passes with the seasons and with the circadian rhythms of the body, but also with the social time constructed through individuals' activities (Bash, 2000; Mills, 2000). As these activities are repeated social institutions emerge, providing increasing regulation and organization of not only the activities themselves but the places and the times in which they occur (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Giddens, 1984). The social aspects of the situation include micro, meso and macro levels. The macro focuses on the social, political and economic conditions and policies that affect the conditions within which people live (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2010). At a macro level can also be considered the community as a whole, *to xorió* (the village), as the inhabitants referred to it. The meso level includes small groups such as the family, the neighbourhood, and one's *paréa* (companions), which are tightly interlinked in this town with the individual, micro, level. Greece has been characterised as a society with collectivistic features, particularly in its more rural regions (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005; Triandis, 1989) and as the following chapters will demonstrate the person and their family are closely integrated. No single element is considered to be the 'cause' of occupation, echoing Dewey's understanding of the situation as a whole, but rather occupation is seen to be the part of economic, social and political structures' transactions with individuals, through time and space (Dear, 1988; Dewey & Bentley, 1949; Giddens, 1984).

The spatial, temporal and social aspects of the situation are integral to the possibilities for occupation and the form that it takes. The individual is part of this process: "we humans functionally inhabit our world; we move through it, and it moves through us" (Garrison, 2002, p. 12S). Focusing on the temporal, spatial and social aspects of the situation in this chapter involves exploring both the conditions with which habits have emerged but also the conditions which influence the possibilities for reflective action on a day to day basis and which are reproduced through people's occupation.

The discussion that follows will first explore the spatial aspects, in particular the place Melissa and its environs. This will be followed by a discussion of the social aspects,

beginning with a focus on the people of the town, including those who consider themselves to be *Melissótes* (people of Melissa) and strongly identify with the place, but also other groups with alternative perspectives. This discussion will then explore some of the social structures – economic, religious, and administrative – that are part of daily life in the town. Finally this chapter will explore the temporal framework within which occupation takes place. While considered separately to facilitate discussion it is evident that the social, temporal and spatial mutually influence each other and are integrated throughout daily occupation.

### **Spatial Aspects: The Places of Everyday Life**

Melissa as a place combined its geographical location with a particular material form and was invested with meaning and value, identity and memory (Gieryn, 2000; Kaiser, 2008). In the ongoing transactional relationship with the individual and their occupation it was being continually reconstructed (Dodgshon, 2008), while as a place it defined and prescribed the activities and the interaction that could take place within it (Giddens, 1984; Gieryn, 2000).

The boundaries of the town as place were flexible and elastic and will be discussed here not strictly in accordance with a geographical (cartographical) description of the town or the administrative boundaries, which included another five villages within the municipality. Rather, I attempt to describe what the inhabitants of the town of Melissa would regard as part of the town as place and within which most of their daily life took place. This included the town itself, part of the mountain behind the town, and the valley beyond it where the farmers had their fields.

The town was compact, the houses close together and most businesses, homes and places of entertainment were within walking distance of each other, although the steep incline that the town was built on made this difficult for some people. The town was also a safe place, although not considered as safe as it had been until the 1980s, when homes and cars were not locked. Although people did now lock doors, some still slept in the open air on their balconies in the summer, or with the balcony doors open. There

were one or two burglaries during the period of the study, which were treated with real concern, but no violent crimes. It was safe to walk around all areas of the town at night.

Extending from the town for many kilometres up and down the valley were the *xoráfia* (fields), where farmers and shepherds worked daily. During the years of the study some fields were being given over to the large panels of solar-energy 'farms'. In the valley were also located the *kalívas* (barns) situated about four kilometres east and west of the village, where some townspeople still keep their farming equipment, while others had been bought and made into holiday homes by city dwellers. A summer nightclub operated amongst the barns to the east. The fields were also where people of all ages collected *xórta* (greens), wild asparagus, snails and camomile, and went hunting according to the seasons. A few people also went for bike rides (motor bike and bicycle) and walks. The river flowed through the centre of the valley and until the late 1990s people had swum and fished there. Increasing pollution levels due to the fertilisers used on the surrounding fields and falling water levels due to increased irrigation meant that I did not meet anyone during the study that still did these activities.

The town also incorporated the mountain rising behind it, with its gorges and gullies, cliffs and footpaths that were individually named and known intimately by many. The mountain was used by many inhabitants who collected herbs and the local mountain tea, walked, picked flowers, herded their flocks, hunted, had barbeques and picnics, and camped. Also on the mountain was to be found the monastery, the home of four nuns, situated a few kilometres up the mountain road where people frequently attended services and there were also a number of small chapels (P.T., 2009<sup>3</sup>). A more recent development on the mountain was the centre for winter sports and take-off sites for hang-gliding.

In addition people moved regularly, even daily, out of the administrative boundaries of the municipality to work, to visit the local towns to shop, attend to administrative

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<sup>3</sup> The name and details of this author have been withheld to preserve confidentiality



requirements, visit doctors, lawyers, and dentists, and to see family, friends, to go to the cinema or for a drink. Athens and other major cities were also familiar to many who had worked or studied there and were regularly visited for jobs or to visit friends and adult children studying there. Other people had family members who had emigrated to America, Canada, the United Kingdom, or who were studying in the UK or France. These children or siblings were visited or visited the town, when economically possible, and frequent, even daily, Skype and telephone calls were held. Finally both as individuals and as organised groups, people travelled throughout Greece and within Europe, for example, the final class of the high school held their traditional end of school, five day trip to Spain in 2010.

Athens, Thessalonica and the nearer large towns were all accessible via the main national train line that ran through the centre of the valley, stopping at the town's station, two kilometres away. There were on average three trains a day, with more stopping at a neighbouring town. The town was linked by road to the county towns and the villages of the area. A thrice daily bus connected the town with Mallia, the main town of the region, but there were no connections to some of the neighbouring, smaller, villages. Many inhabitants used their own cars as transportation, including for trips to Athens (Mallia was a 40 minute drive away, and Athens was reached in 2 hours). However, as petrol prices doubled with increased taxation during the first 18 months of the study, travel was reduced. There were fewer visitors to the town, but also the townspeople were able to travel less frequently, particularly to Athens where charges at the toll posts had also doubled. In the summer of 2011 for the first time I heard someone trying to arrange to car pool in order to drive over to the sea for a swim and share petrol costs. Bus and train fares remained quite reasonable, but the expected privatisation of these will possibly lead to the increased physical isolation of the town.

### **The material form of the town.**

The material form of the town (Gieryn, 2000), provided a sensory experience of a place deeply embedded in the natural environment in which it was set. Apart from the spectacular views of the mountain above and the valley spreading out below, the town had a large number of springs which flowed from *vríses* (stone fountains), and three squares shaded by shaped mulberry trees and large plane trees. Many of the houses

had gardens with a variety of vegetables, fowl of various kinds (hens, ducks, geese and turkeys), fruit trees and flowering trees, bushes and plants. Even in the centre of the town there were many plots that had not been built on, leaving open, rough spaces between houses and shops, and on some people left farming equipment and tractors. In other places, and particularly in the old town, deserted houses were falling down and being reclaimed by climbing creepers and vines. Snakes (vipera and tree snakes) and scorpions were occasionally found, particularly in store rooms and gardens of houses on the upper slopes of the town.

The inhabitants were not sheltered from the demands of the natural environment, for example, the climb from the lowest level of the town to the highest houses was extremely steep in some places, rising about 300 metres in total. There were no shopping malls or covered walkways and the streets were unprotected from the weather, both the snow in winter and the heat of the summer sun. Living in the town I was always aware of the presence, but also the power of nature; nature filled my senses and influenced my occupation.

### ***Homes.***

*To spíti* (home) was more than just a place of physical shelter it was also the centre of family life in the town and was traditionally inherited, and no building of new homes took place during the study. There were 1,287 homes in the town according to the 2001 census (P. T., 2009), while the changing nature of the town was demonstrated by the further 460 that were second or holiday homes and the 287 that were empty.

Traditionally people lived within the town, farmers travelling daily to their fields, and the narrow streets with closely built homes, particularly of the older town, suggested a people with close relationships and a communal way of life. The oldest part of the town was situated above the upper square, high on the side of the mountain. It was designated as a Traditional Hamlet (with restrictions on new building), and consisted of approximately 500 homes (P. T., 2009), mostly built in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, with engraved stones marking the completion date and name of the family who had lived there. Most of the houses were built close together from local stone with red tiled roofs, high stone garden walls and inset solid-wood gates under stone arches. Built for

farmers, the traditional design consisted of a ground floor divided in two, used as stabling for the animals and for keeping farming equipment, grain etc., and an upper floor that was used as living quarters. Some had an inner courtyard and others a more extensive garden. This area of the town contained houses in a wide range of condition, from those that were falling down and abandoned to some that had been recently restored at considerable expense. The streets were narrow, single track with no pavements, surfaced with paving stones or cement. While the streets parallel to the hill were flat, rising between these were extremely steep narrow paths and sometimes steps. In the centre of this area was the Turkish built stone water fount where events and dances were held in the past. At most times of the day this area was very quiet. I usually walked through these streets without seeing or hearing anyone. Residents in this area usually used a car to get to and from the centre of the town further down the hill, while the most elderly remained isolated in their homes.

Further down the hill on the shopping streets, there were mainly two storey buildings with an apartment built over the ground floor shop. Newer houses, often made of plastered brick, began to be built in the 1980's with the increasing wealth of some of the farmers. These newer houses were built lower down the slopes, around the lower square, and had larger storage areas for their modern tractors and businesses. The new area of Drossia was built to one side of the town on land gifted to the refugees when they arrived in the town. The Drossiotes, most of whom did not farm, built houses without the traditional lower floor storage space. Some had built apartments for their parents on the ground floor.

Geographically, homes were spread throughout the town, and were to be found next door to and built over shops and other commercial buildings, as well as in residential areas. I was told there was no status attached to the positioning of the house.

Regarding their form, houses ranged in size from single storied homes with two rooms, to two storied houses with three or four bedrooms. Although there was some difference in the size of houses, there were no very large houses or mansions. In the centre of the town and the traditional district most of the houses were attached (although each house had a slightly different design); in other parts of the town houses were often detached. The outside area, garden or yard were usually kept scrupulously tidy and

clean, although the next-door empty plot of land often contained building rubble and rusting machinery. Windows always had shutters to protect against both cold and heat, and houses were built from east to west to take advantage of cooling breezes and protect from the heat of the sun. The lower halves of many windows were covered with cut lace curtains with traditional designs, while others had full net curtains. Upper floors usually had a balcony.

Inside the house, it was common for the kitchen to be combined with the living area, where there was often a fireplace. Somewhere in this room there was usually a small shrine. This consisted of one or two icons set on a shelf or in a small alcove, with the lamp that was kept lit at all times. Some homes had a separate *salóni* (lounge) which was not used on a daily basis (except perhaps for children to do private lessons), but was reserved for celebrations and formal events. Family photographs in silver frames, cut glass ornamental bowls and vases, and some ornaments, were displayed on the central coffee table or in the wall unit, all standing on pristine white cut-lace cloths. It was not usual to find many books in the wall unit, perhaps a set of encyclopaedias and some illustrated large books, but it usually held a display of glasses and bottles of drink. The chairs were kept covered with throws, removed when there were guests, while the head and armrests were often covered with protective embroidered cloths. Mrs. Dimitra told me that really they had done so much embroidery and cut lace work in order to cover the rather plain and perhaps rather worn, furniture, and they were not really needed any more as people were able to afford new furniture. Bedrooms were usually small, the majority of space being given to the living/family rooms, perhaps due to the more collective life style. Homes were regularly decorated and kept spotlessly clean (or at least were cleaned thoroughly when guests were invited), signifying a good housewife and a well organised household (see Chapter 7).

Regarding the regionalisation (Giddens, 1984) of the various parts of the house, that is, the zoning of time-space and daily occupation, the bedrooms were typically used only for sleeping and for watching TV. It was common for people to sleep in the living room on the sofa during the mid-day rest. At night, who slept where was also flexible – a child might sleep with one parent, especially if ill or distressed, while some adults regularly fell asleep and slept on the sofa in the living room. While extended family

members moved freely throughout the house, visitors were not expected to see into the bedrooms.

The house was the most private of the town's places and where the inhabitants carried out their daily occupations of sleeping, eating, washing and resting. The home was important, not only as the place where the individual belonged (Hasselkus, 2002) but particularly, in this town, it was the place where the family was located. Families rarely moved and a child would usually grow up in the same home with the same neighbours. On marriage the *nífi* (bride and daughter-in-law) frequently lived with her husband and his parents in the family home. They might then work to build their own home if they could afford it or might continue to live with the grandparents, looking after them in old age and then inheriting the home. Houses were rarely sold and were inherited by family members. Therefore, the home was the place that incorporated the symbolic and emotional meaning and history of the family, and many of the older inhabitants were born and will die in the same home.

Moving out from the private space of the home towards the public areas, an in-between space was the neighbourhood.

### ***The Neighbourhood.***

Surrounding the home was the *yeitoniá* (the neighbourhood), the place where children played and the source of lifelong relationships, as people commented: "*megalósame stin ídia yeitoniá*" (we grew up in the same neighbourhood). The neighbourhood was not defined by any specific geographical or administrative boundary but usually referred to the five to ten houses in the immediate location of the home, and the people who lived in them. It defined the physical setting and the people in it, the word incorporating both.

In most parts of the town, houses were built close together and balconies on the upper floors brought the houses even closer together. Therefore, the neighbourhoods demonstrated high "presence-availability" (Giddens, 1984, p. 122), providing many opportunities for the inhabitants to physically come together. Neighbours talked to each

other from their balconies, shared equipment and food, heard each other's arguments, and saw each other coming and going from their house and up and down the street.

However, the declining population of the town, and the increasingly ageing population was leading to change in the neighbourhoods. Celebrations were seen to be not so much fun any more as fewer people were available to participate. Katerina's mother, living on her own towards the edge of the town, was afraid (generally), as there was only one other old woman still living in her neighbourhood.

### ***The Squares.***

Moving out socially and physically from the home and the neighbourhood, the site of public activity were the three *plateíes* (squares) of the town. The lower square was considered the main square. "*Tha eímai plateía*" (I will be in the square) was a frequent phrase used to arrange a meeting and always implied the lower square, and sometimes for the people living in the upper town "*érxomai káto*" (I'm coming down) was sufficient – down implying down to the square. The upper square was further up the hill, at the edge of the traditional centre of the town, and had been the centre of the town until the late 1970s. The square to the east of the town was established as the centre of the Drossia district.

All three squares were shaded in the summer months by large plane and trained maple trees and were bordered by tavernas and cafés, with outdoor tables on the square whenever the weather was suitable. They were the focal point of social life throughout the year. Here was where the men in particular met daily for coffee, ouzo or tsipouro with *mezé*, both with their *paréa* (companions) and for business, often in their particular *stéki* (haunt/hangout). Other people hung out in the squares, chatting while standing or sitting on a wall or bench. At the weekends and summer evenings children were brought to the squares to play while their parents drank coffee and chatted to friends. Teenagers and young adults preferred the café at the end of the main street that was more private, and which had become their *stéki*, and once able to drive they also went to neighbouring villages. However by their late 20's couples seemed to come back to use the squares again, particularly if they had young children.

The lower square was also the place where many of the major events took place during the year. Carnival celebrations, including the parade was held here and the annual bazaar in the autumn. During August there were performances of Greek dancing and singing. For any large event the café and taverna owners set up temporary open barbeques serving *souvlákia* (barbecued chunks of pork on sticks) and it was often impossible to find a spare chair as people packed the square.

### ***Places for entertainment and sport.***

Entertainment and relaxing in the town focused around casual social activities in the bars, tavernas, cafés and one night club. These were located around the squares, along the commercial streets and along the main road leading out of the town. There was no cinema or theatre in the town. The nearest cinema was in Mallia and the nearest theatres in Athens. During the summer a stage was erected in the grounds of the High School and there was a theatrical performance, usually of a comedy of Aristophanes or Shakespeare, and one or two music concerts of both local (from the private music school) and national singers and groups, with dancing, drinks and *souvlákia*. The Young People's Association and the older High School students held occasional parties in the grounds of the Junior School.

Sports and athletic activities mirrored the popular sports nationally and the natural opportunities provided by the physical environment. Publicly owned athletic facilities included an indoor gymnasium (used for basketball and volleyball), a 5-a-side football pitch and a regular football pitch, their upkeep was the responsibility of the local council. There was a small private dance school, which also offered gym classes to adults. The Hill Walking Association organized ski lessons for children in the winter and an annual walk in August. National competitions were held in the countryside around the town, including a cross-country run on the mountain, a car rally, and a hang gliding competition

Recreational activities were predominantly casual and social, based around meeting friends and ones *paréa* (companions/gang) for coffee, a drink or a meal. The number of facilities offering opportunities for these indicating their importance: the lower square together with the road that ran through it had six *kafeneío* (café-bars), five

*tavernas*/restaurants and one *kafeneío*/ *souvláki* shop. The other two squares had two establishments each. Three petrol stations also had small café-bars. All of these were privately owned and usually run on a day to day basis by the owner.

There was some variation in style between these establishments, partially reflecting the taste of the owner and their financial standing, but also current fashions and the customer they were hoping to attract. Each of the squares maintained one *kafeneío* in the very simple traditional style, with plain white washed walls, small rectangular wooden tables and upright, cane-seated chairs. They were frequented almost exclusively by older men as their *stéki* (haunt) within walking distance of their home (Papataxiarchis, 2006). The Blackbird, on the Lower Square, had adopted the style known in Greece as a 'Lounge-Café'. Furnishings included comfortable settees, armchairs and low coffee tables in a large room, with a fire-place in one corner and two TV screens. A variety of coffees, drinks, crêpes and pizzas, made it a popular meeting place in the winter for families with children, groups of women and friends. During the study another *kafeneío* opened on the lower square, adopting a modern-traditional style, and interestingly it was immediately and openly supported by the women – “*finally we have somewhere to go*” – more than one told me. This was not completely accurate, the Blackbird had offered a similar environment for some time, but may indicate the importance of the owner as well as the physical setting. The owner of the Blackbird was thought to charge high prices, while the new *kafeneío* was opened by one of the old and known families of the town, and so may have attracted a different clientele.

The *tavernas* had generally attempted a style, with varying degrees of success, considered appropriate for a tourist village in the mountains – with the original stone walls revealed, polished wooden tables, subtle lighting fixtures and old photographs on the walls. One was refurbished in this style during the study period and its customers changed from being predominantly single male immigrants, to being local families and groups of friends.

There were two bars in the town, which also opened in the morning to serve coffee. Some of the petrol stations also had café-bars, a tradition throughout Greece developed from the needs of long distance travellers. They were popular with the



single, unemployed men, some of whom seemed to be slightly socially displaced, although working men also used them.

The night club ran during the winter months and was to be found about five hundred metres out of the town – far enough away to not disturb the peace, but close enough for people to walk to. Situated in a large barn like building, the programme started at around midnight and ran until four or five in the morning. Operating usually with recorded music, occasional attractions included live singers, dancing girls and Karaoke nights. A summer club operated further from the town, while other clubs and bars operated in villages and towns further away and people also went to these.

Important to all these places of public occupation, is that the majority were small businesses, locally owned. The only exception was the supermarket that was part of a national chain. While using privately owned spaces has been linked to a shaping of occupation to conform to the demands of the owner in how and at what cost the space can be used (Pollard & Sakellariou, 2012e), in the town being locally owned meant being largely dependent on local support for survival. This required an ongoing reciprocal relationship between owner and customer as the owner was obliged to try to fulfil the demands and requirements of his or her customers. A story is told in the town of how the 'regulars' reaction to one of the *kafeneío* owners beginning to offer breakfasts to tourists in their *stéki*, was to tell the tourists that they were not wanted and that they should leave. Told as a 'good story' to demonstrate locals' attitudes, there were however ongoing discussions about the menu and the décor as customer and owner co-constructed these places.

Following on from this broad description of the place Melissa, the physical setting of daily life and the occupation that this facilitated, discussion will now turn to the social aspects. This will begin with a discussion of the people of Melissa, the self-identification of some with the town as they describe themselves as *Melissótes*, and those people who were seen as belonging to other groups. In continuation the economic, political, administrative and religious structures of the town will be explored.

## Social Aspects

### **“We are Melissótes”. Identity and the town.**

The town of Melissa was more than a container for peoples' occupation; it was an integral part of their sense of who they were. For those people born in the town, they entered an ongoing historical and situated story through individual and social memories, sustained through such forms as verbal stories, books, and photographs. Growing up, they incorporated the place in their embodied experiences of both daily occupation and specific events. The town was part of their horizon of everyday life and part of their identity (Rowles, 1991).

Those townspeople who had lived in Melissa all their lives identified themselves as “*Melissótes*” (people of Melissa), as a part of the ongoing history of the town including the people who had lived there. The history of the town was known through a number of published local authors. The library, situated in the lower square, had two shelves of books devoted to the local area and the librarian told me that it was these books that were borrowed most frequently.

Many people in the town owned a copy of a local history of the area. It was therefore widely known that evidence of inhabitation from the New Stone Age was found during excavations (1949-50) for the building of the High School, which revealed tombs from that period, and that from this and documentary evidence E.<sup>4</sup> (1978) suggested that the town was thriving from Mycenaean times (1,600-1,100 B.C.). There was no material evidence of the years during which Greece formed part of the Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantine). On the site of the castle built during that time there still stood the eleven metre high stone tower, part of the later Frankish castle built during their occupation (1204 to 1414) (E., 1978). This tower was located at one of the highest points of the

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<sup>4</sup> The name and details of this author have been withheld to preserve confidentiality

town and was very much part of the everyday landscape. In 1453 with the fall of Constantinople, Melissa, along with most of Greece, became part of the Ottoman Empire. Considerable religious and economic freedom was given to the town and no mosque or minaret was built. Only the Agha (chief of the area), his family and guards lived in what was now the oldest section of the town, his house was identified next to the stone fount. These stories of the place were repeated to children and visitors.

As well as this knowledge of the history of the town and its physical remains, there was a sense of being connected to the people who had lived there stretching back in time to Ancient Greece. On a number of occasions I heard townspeople describe themselves as Dorians:

*One occasion took place late one night in a taverna, when the five or six people still there were holding a common conversation across the tables. They were discussing the characteristic behaviour of the people of the town, and comparing it to that of the more recently arrived people living in the Drossia area of the town. One man in his mid 30s, said, "of course we are Dorians, and they are Aeolians". The others agreed and also, they explained to me, people in the surrounding towns were Ionians rather than Dorians.*

The Dorians, Aeolians and Ionians are three of the four ethnic groups into which the ancient Greeks of classical times divided themselves. The Dorians were the Greeks of Sparta and the Peloponnese, and were considered to be superior to the other groups (Alty, 1982). The people gathered in the taverna used these origins to explain the pride, hardworking and morality of the Dorian townspeople, while the people from Drossia, as Aeolians, were seen to be more outgoing and fun-loving.

That people from the same area share common characteristics is generally accepted in Greece, where it is common on meeting someone to ask "where are you from" in order to establish these characteristics. The *Melissótes* were proud of their shared identity as Dorians, and of other characteristics which they illustrated through their stories. For example, they were known to be local leaders; the town had been a *kefaloxóri* (head-village) since the Ottoman occupation. Documents from 1775 (E., 1978), listed the local *árxontes* (lords), who were responsible for administration, taxation, law, and the safety

of the Agha and other officials, and many of these were ancestors of people who still lived in the town. I was told stories of how the *Melissótes* acquired most of the farming land in the valley when the Agha left:

*It was said that one man had bought up several thousand acres and then sold off sections to his fellow townspeople. The neighbouring villagers were said to have been too busy eating and drinking and so missed the opportunity.*

Another story explained the declining population of the town as due to the intelligence of the people:

*Mr. Simos told me that in 1905 Melissa was one of the biggest towns in the county with a population of over 5,000 compared to the country capital Mallia, which had a population of 7,000. Now Mallia had about 15,000 and the town less than 3,000. I asked what he thought that was due to and he said: "the villagers 'walk'. They leave, because there are clever, to go to do other things. Do you know, the head of atomic energy in USA is from the village?"*

I was told with pride of the High School that had been built in 1937 with funds provided by the association "Melissiótes of America" (E., 1978). Many towns had such Associations, both abroad and in Athens, formed by emigrants who wished to support their town of birth. The High School with science labs and changing facilities was ultra modern at that time, and the success of many of its students was attributed in part to these facilities.

I also was told about the mechanical skills of the townspeople and shown the old photographs on the walls of the museum of their early mechanised farming equipment. The older people were also proud of the age many of the population lived to, pointing out that most people in the cemetery had lived to over 80 and some to over 100. Finally the townspeople were proud of the morality in the town. They stated that they were *oikoyeneiárhes* (family men), *noikokúroi* (householders) (see Chapter 7), and that they did not have "*Russian women in bars and a drug problem*" like some of the neighbouring villages.

Stories were told both from the past and the present and referred to different people, but the over arching theme was of pride, as the stories told demonstrated the intelligence, leadership, morality and other qualities of the *Melissótes*. Consistent with more closed communities where histories are told that reinforce the community identity (Eisenhauer, Krannich, & Blahna, 2000), the older townspeople and the members of the original families preserved their identity as *Melissótes* through their stories and books, but also through the annual celebration of traditional events, and the activities of the local Folk Law Association, particularly the museums. Identity therefore was not only linked to the past but to the ongoing relived experience; in occupational terms, through doing and belonging (Huot & Laliberte Rudman, 2010).

A local saying was: “Ours is the best village in the world. If you don’t agree, look at it through our eyes and you will agree”. I was told that the townspeople liked to live in Melissa because they felt insecure elsewhere. The town provided ontological safety, a known world, based also on the embodied experience of growing up in the town.

### **The embodied environment.**

The identity of being a *Melissótis* enveloped those who grew up in the town as a member of one of the older families, as habitual ways of doing and knowing developed through their transaction with the world (Brinkmann, 2011; Dewey, 1922/2007). In the previous chapter Sophia discussed her embodied experience of growing up in the town. Martha, a *kséni* (foreign) wife from Athens, tried to explain the characteristics of the townspeople as she perceived them, when she told me that the town’s people were so hard (in character) because they were people of the mountain, and walking on stone made them hard.

The mountain figured largely in many of the stories but also in the daily activities of those living in the town. The mountain, or more accurately the range of mountains, rose to 2,500 metres above sea level, and towered over the town. The wide plain spread out in front of it towards the north before meeting a range of lower hills, and extended east and west for many kilometres. Yiannis told me that the people of the mountains were different from the people who lived on the plain because they saw things from high up: “*it gives you a different perception of the world*”. Many of the people living in the higher

districts of the town with spectacular views down the valley from their homes, talked of how the view *aplónei to máti* (spreads the eye) – a literal but also a metaphoric expression that described seeing further, better, more clearly, a seeing that puts things into perspective.

The town had grown up on the lower slopes of the mountain, the farmers living close together rather than individually on their land. The older people recounted stories from their childhood and young adult years of a close knit community lifestyle, interrelated with the mountain and the fields: *Makis remembered hearing each morning before dawn the sound of the mules setting off towards the fields as the farmers (men and women) set off in a long train towards the fields. Mrs. Dimitra remembered a celebration when, almost before knowing it, neighbours had brought tables, chairs, food and wine and the dancing had started. Ariadne remembered the long summers spent on the mountain, where many families had built small holiday homes close together. Occasionally stories were told of the German occupation, a few of the men, young boys at the time, remembered days spent hiding on the mountain when the Germans first arrived. One man told of how he had been quite a musician as a boy, his father had bought him a violin, but he had never played it again after his father was shot, executed with eleven other men and boys in retaliation for a raid on the local railway bridge by the partisans in 1943.*

Town, mountain and plain were interlinked in memories, physical and emotional experiences. Whatever happened in the present incorporated this sense and knowledge of the past. However, the inhabitants of the town were not a homogenous group and not all inhabitants had grown up in the town.

### **Other people of the town.**

As discussed, those who perceived themselves to be *Melissótes* were members of the town's long established families - a young farmer, Michaelis, reckoned that he had at least 100 *sói* (relatives) living in the town. The strength of their identification with the town and their lifelong knowledge and familiarity with each other led to a strong sense of the 'other' in relation to all *ksénoi* (foreigners). This did not only include those of a different nationality but all Greeks who were not from the town.

Similarly, not all the town's inhabitants would identify themselves as *Melissótes*. One group was the *ksénes nífes* (foreign brides), a large group due to the patrilocal society. They included Greek women, mainly from other towns and villages but also from Australia and Canada, who had moved to the town on marriage. They seemed to maintain a slightly tense balance between their husband's town and family and their own origins. Another group was the *Drossiotes*, refugees from northern Greece, forced to move when their own village was destroyed by a landslide in the mid 60s. They had been given land to one side of the original town and had built their own neighbourhood around a square. These people still self identified and were identified by others as *Drossiotes*, although many of the young adults had been born and brought up in the town. Another group of inhabitants in the town were immigrants from other Balkan countries (particularly Albania) and former Eastern European countries (particularly Bulgaria and Romania), who began to immigrate, most illegally, to the town in the early 1990s. By the time of the study these people were accepted residents, as most of them were, by then, well established, mainly in the building trade, and *oikoyeneiárhes* (heads of families) (further discussed in Chapter 7). However, as only resident for up to 15 years in the town, there were still considered newcomers and they themselves did not consider themselves *Melissótes*, or certainly not in the way understood by the established families. One woman from Bulgaria, married to a *Melissótis*, with children, took full part in all the local activities, traditions and festivals, but was also aware that she would not be given the same opportunities, for example for employment, as a woman from the town. Most recently city dwellers had built holiday homes in the town and the surrounding areas. These incomers had all brought new experiences and ways of living to the town, but had also created links with their places of origin as they returned for visits, taking children and friends, bringing cheap goods or new technology, and speaking other languages or dialects.

While members of the town's core families told me the stories already described, some of these *ksénoi* (foreigners) identified less flattering characteristics of the townspeople, which were occasionally recognized by the *Melissótes* themselves. These included that they were considered hard people, not as sociable as neighbouring villagers (evidenced by the fewer tavernas), and rather stingy (indicated by the high per capita deposits in the local bank). They had not developed the tourism potential of the town as

much as they could, due, it was said, to the fact that they did not want to serve other people, and were seen to be conservative and holding back the town's development.

The danger inherent in labelling people into groups is well recognized, and I do not want to suggest uniformity either of opinions or behaviours. However, these groupings were frequently recognised and referred to in daily conversation and doings, behaviour was attributed or compared to these, and they were the base of marginalisation of occupational choices and opportunities for some people.

Social aspects also include the structural forms that have emerged to organise and regulate many aspects of everyday life, particularly the economic, administrative, political and religious. These will now be considered briefly.

### **Economic organisation.**

The town had existed as a farming community with related shops and services for hundreds of years. According to the 2001 census, 293 people (34% of the working population) were farmers (P. T., 2009), most coming from farming families. Their children grew up around animals and tractors, with memories of harvesting, and learnt to drive from the age they could reach the pedals and see over the steering wheel. Agricultural land was used to cultivate mainly wheat, corn, cotton and olives and almost 5,000 sheep and goats were grazed in the area (P. T., 2009). Tobacco had also been a major profit making crop in the area, although the withdrawal of subsidies had reduced production by the time of the study.

Of the remaining population, 25% were employed in the various institutions common to any state – education, health, energy provision, police, fire service, local government. The remaining 40% were largely self-employed, mainly in the service industries, commercial sector and building trades (P.T., 2009). There were a few small companies, trading in alternative energy, furniture, solar panels and shelving units. There were also four petrol stations. Since 1980 when the ski centre opened there was a steady but slow (compared to neighbouring villages) growth in related tourism. Unemployment, particularly for those women without higher education, was high.



Characteristic of the town's economic structures was the ongoing decline of the commercial sector over the preceding 50 years, the displacement of the town centre from around the upper square to around the lower square, and the steadily decreasing and ageing population. Until the 1970s the upper square had been the commercial centre of the town, bustling with shops of all kinds and *kafeneío*. The shops had continued on the roads leading out of the square and particularly on both sides of the long commercial street that led steeply down to the lower square. At that time the lower square was an open space where the long distance buses stopped for refreshment. At the time of the study these spatial arrangements had changed completely. There was one small *tavérna* on the upper square but no commercial shops. The last remaining greengrocers serving the upper town closed during the study due to the ill health of the elderly owner. On the long commercial street almost half the shops were empty, shutters pulled down, and few people were about. In contrast the lower square had been laid out and paved, and a large building housing the library, a museum, a cultural centre and a café had been built by the municipality in the 1990s. The road leading past the edge of the square was the main shopping street, including a branch of a national supermarket, although the number of shops was still greatly reduced compared to the past.

A number of factors seem to have led to this reversal of what had been the centre and the peripheral regions of the town (Giddens, 1984), and the slow decline of the commercial businesses. From the 1950s the population of the town had steadily declined, with the corresponding massive economic expansion of the urban areas, particularly Athens. Within the town economic opportunities had remained fairly stable until the mid 1980s when the income of some of the farmers increased dramatically. This was due to two external institutions, until that time completely unrelated with the town. First, in the mid 1980s, American companies contracted out some of the farmers to grow Virginia tobacco for huge (by local standards) payments, increasing their income overnight a thousand fold. This was followed in the 1990s and onwards by European Union farming subsidies. This led to the first instance of income inequality in the town as the increased wealth of some enabled consumerism beyond survival needs, including luxury purchases of ultra-modern tractors and cars, holidays, and property in Athens. People also built new houses towards the lower end of the town where land was available. At the same time more people had their own cars and were

able to travel regularly to the expanding shopping centres in Mallia and even Athens. With more spare income and transport available, shopping became an excuse for a day out in a bigger town, and fewer customers used the local shops.

Income inequality also led to social differentiation. I was told that once tobacco money had come “*they thought they were too good to go down to the river at the weekend like we used to*”. People remarked how prior to the mid 1980s people used to get together to share a simple meal, sing and dance, but that these evenings were increasingly marked by varying standards of furnishings, clothes and the range of dishes offered, creating competition and stress for some women. However, despite these differences in buying power there was little entrenched social disparity, apart from that linked to one’s group identity (e.g. *Mellisotes*, foreigner). There was no private education in the town and all children were encouraged to enter higher education regardless of their parents’ income. Additionally, the square and the *kafeneío* were uniformly used by all people in the town, and all were able to participate in the community events.

The declining population seemed to be due to a combination of the economic expansion of Athens, the failure of the town to invest in development, and the importance of education. Higher education was seen to be the way to social advancement for the whole family (Paxson, 2004), and was available to any student with the ability and the will to work hard enough to pass the entry exams. However, it seemed to have led to the most able young people leaving the town and not returning. A number of people noted that the town had been foolish not to develop opportunities for their bright young people to return to work in the locality. The population, as a result, was increasingly ageing. Already in the period 1991 – 2001 there had been a significant rise in the number of older people in the population (P. T., 2009) and while statistical analysis of the 2011 census had not been released, the trend continued for the young people to move to the large towns to study and to stay there. Whether this will be influenced by the increasing unemployment in the major cities due to the financial crisis, with young people returning to live at home in the town, remains to be seen.

The worsening economic situation at both a global, but increasingly at a national level, was a major event that emerged during the study. The ongoing farming subsidies

provided by the EU (until 2013) limited the effect of the crisis on the local farmers, while worst hit was the local tourist business as the Athenian middle class, who had been frequent visitors, were no longer able to afford weekends away. During the ten years prior to the study there had been extensive building of holiday homes and hotels, but this stopped almost completely and a number of holiday homes remained unsold. Increasing petrol prices restricted the use of private cars for both locals and tourists, while the increase in heating oil prices was a major concern. Tax on heating oil, which had been subsidised, was increased, with a rise of close to 150% between the winter of 2007-08 and 2011-12. There were ongoing conversations about alternative heating methods particularly ecological stoves using recycled pellets. However, they seemed to be beyond the budget of many people, particularly those most in need. Greatly increased property tax and reduced pensions particularly affected the older people living in large, inherited properties.

Finally, the nature of employment in the town, that is, that many people were self-employed or employed within a family business, together with the spatio-temporal organisation of work, deeply influenced the nature of everyday life. Apart from the farmers who had to travel to reach their fields, the temporal and spatial distance between home and business or work place was relatively short with most of the businesses and services located within or close to the town. These factors meant that rather than the major separation between work and leisure time and place, described as characteristic of Western society (Giddens, 1984), there was temporal and spatial fluidity between work and leisure, home and work place. Relationships also intermingled as colleagues and customers might also be husband and wife, parents and children, friends or family, and certainly would be *gnostoi* (known people).

Interlinked with business, economy and *gnostoi* (known people) was politics, which was an influential aspect of family and public life.

### **Political institutions.**

Greece became an independent state in 1822, an event still celebrated annually on the 25<sup>th</sup> of March. Significant political events within living memory were the civil war of 1946 – 1949 and the dictatorship of 1967 – 1974, events which indicate both deep

divides within Greek society itself (although rarely talked about in the town), but also the ongoing involvement of foreign powers in internal affairs (Rafailides, 1993). At the time of the study the two main political parties in Greece were the right wing *Nea Demokratía* party (New Democracy) and the PanHellenic Socialist Movement, (PASOK) which was the elected government. The KKE (the communist party) and SYRIZA (a coalition of Euro-communist parties) also had seats in parliament.

As is common in Greece, politics was deeply entrenched in all aspects of daily life in the town, was a frequent topic of conversation, and voting was considered an obligation and a right. Mr. Nikos explained to me that everyone in the town was a signed-up member of one of the parties and that nothing could be done without political connections. The extent to which this remained the case at the time of the study was not possible to ascertain. However, all parties had local organisations active in the town, and it was said that certain families had managed to get more than one of their children into the civil service due to their membership of a particular party.

Politically the town brought in a majority for *Nea Demokratia* in national and local elections, and the further right, royalist party, also received votes. In the last elections (2012), held after data collection was completed, a small number of people voted for the emerging far right party, Golden Dawn. Under the new Kallikratis Law (2010) that drew up new municipal boundaries, Melissa was joined with two neighbouring towns, both predominantly PASOK. This law was passed during a PASOK government and when one of these PASOK controlled towns was made head of the new municipality, the townspeople perceived this to be due to political manoeuvrings aimed to weaken the strength of *Nea Demokratia* in the area. The existing party divisions within the town made it extremely difficult for the townspeople to develop a common strategy to work to support the town as a whole in these new circumstances, which however, did not substantially affect day to day administration.

### **Administration.**

Local administration was organized around the municipal authority led by the elected Mayor and town council. Until 2010 the town had been head of the municipal area with responsibility for five smaller villages. As discussed, the Kallikratis law of 2010 changed

the town's status, and was an enormous shock for the *Mellisótes* in particular (further discussed in Chapter 8). Despite the townspeople's fears that this would lead to the relocation of public services away from the town, this did not happen during the study.

As the (former) administrative centre of the municipality, located in the town were: offices of the national electricity and water companies; a Centre for Serving the Public (*Kentro Eksipiretisis Politon* KEP); an agricultural cooperative, post office and branches of the National Bank of Greece and the Agricultural Bank (as well as branches of two private banks). For the people of the town administrative procedures, although time consuming due to the considerable paper work required for most transactions, were relatively simple as most services were located in the town, within walking distance or with easily available parking. They were also frequently staffed by *gnostoí* (acquaintances), if not a family member, who were able to explain or help with the procedures. Those services located in other towns, for example, signing on the unemployment register, were more difficult to organise due to the physical distances and the limited public transport.

Public order was under the legal authority of the police officers located in a small police station on the main street, with police officers from Mallia assisting during major public events or investigations. The county court was also located in the town housed in a purpose built building. The fire service was supplemented during the summer months by volunteers who kept watch on the mountain for fires. A major forest fire in 1970s had burnt most of the forest above the town including the summer homes of the townspeople.

Regarding health and social care, there was a health centre with doctors, nurses and a social worker, and an Open Centre for the Care of the Elderly (KAPI). Education was provided through a kindergarten, a junior school and a high school (gymnasio for the initial three years of compulsory education and the lyceum for the three final years of non-compulsory education). Together these various services provide employment for 137 people, 20% of the working population (P. T., 2009).

## **Religious institutions.**

The Greek Orthodox Church, a branch of the Eastern Christian Church, is the official national religion and 98% of the population are Greek Orthodox (Mylonas, Gari, Giotsa, Pavlopoulos, & Panagiotopoulou, 2006). The Orthodox Church has always been closely linked to Greek national identity, the term Helleno-Christianity being used to describe a historical, spiritual and intellectual heritage that stretches from Ancient Greece to the present day (Molokotos-Liederman, 2004). The church and state remain intertwined structurally (the church is under the authority of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs which pays the salaries of priests, approves the appointments of bishops and grants licences to religious buildings), and ideologically (some groups see the religion as synonymous with Greek citizenship) (Molokotos-Liederman, 2004). In the town there were four orthodox churches including the metropolis and a number of chapels dedicated to various saints, many located outside the town. Many of these had been built by money collected from specific local associations.

The Church was a major influence on daily life and rhythms, both through the major holidays of Easter and Christmas, but also through the various feast days of saints. These *yiortés* (feast days) were important because not only the saint was celebrated, but also all those people baptised with the same name. Children were usually baptised with the name of their grandfather or grandmother, cousins often shared the same name, and so frequently several family members celebrated their *yiortí* together. In the town, there were a number of extremely common names, and on those Saint's days it felt as though the whole town was celebrating. Traditionally the *yiortí* was celebrated rather than the birthday, with people visiting the home of the *yiortasómenos* (person celebrating) throughout the evening.

The church also laid down a complex guide to eating and fasting, providing another rhythm to weekly and seasonal life. The main fasting periods were before Easter, Christmas, the 15<sup>th</sup> of August (Assumption of the Virgin Mary), and the 14<sup>th</sup> of September (The Elevation of the Holy Cross) (see *Appendix I*). Wednesdays and Fridays were also days for fasting and there were further specific fasting days throughout the year. Restrictions applied to meat, milk products and eggs, while on

major fast days oil was also restricted. Those who wished to observe these fasts and holidays kept a detailed calendar to remind themselves of the relevant days.

Intertwining with the places and social institutions of the town were the temporal rhythms that in part arose with and of them.

## **Temporal Rhythms**

In the discussion of the identity of the *Melissótes* were incorporated elements of historical time, not in the sense of accurately divided units of years or centuries, but in the memories contained in stories, books, myths, places and lived experiences which gave the inhabitants a sense of what had gone before, but which was also part of the present. In common with many Greeks, the past, even the ancient past was very much alive in the present (Sarafis, 1990).

As a farming community for many generations, the seasons and the rhythms of farming life were still felt in the annual and daily calendar of the town. Each day started early, at dawn for those still involved in farming, but a habit also kept by many of the older people, who described how they woke up at four or five each morning. Traditionally farmers would work till midday, before eating in the fields, having a rest, and working again before dark fell and they returned home. Daily life continued to mirror these hours with a midday rest dividing the day in two for the majority of people. Shops were usually open by eight, closing again for lunch and the midday rest by two, before opening again between five and eight. Public institutions, which had followed these working times in the past, were now no longer open in the evenings and Saturdays, employees working from seven until three, and schools started at eight and finished between one and two depending on the grade. By two the retired men had left the *kafeneío*, and in most houses lunch, the main meal of the day, was eaten between two and three.

In the middle of the day, between three and five, it was illegal to disturb the public peace, and many people would sleep while others watched TV. Generally a rest in the

middle of the day was considered important and even people working until five would often have a short sleep on return home before beginning the evening's activities. In the heat of summer the rest often went on for longer and people slept later at night.

The second part of the day, the *apóeyvma* (aftermeal/afternoon) started after five. The men reappeared in the *kafeneío* to take their afternoon coffee. Women might meet with friends in the *yeitoniá* (neighbourhood) for their coffee though increasingly if they had time they would also go out to a café. Farmers and those with their own businesses went back to work. It was a time for household tasks such as washing the balcony, watering the garden, doing the ironing. Children went to athletic activities, music and foreign language lessons, or *frontistírion* (tuition centres). The shops opened again on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday afternoons. Businesses such as lawyers and accounting offices, dentists and doctors all worked in the afternoons too. The evening meal, usually a lighter meal than lunch, was eaten after nine, although it could be much later. Most people slept at around midnight, although an evening out at a club often did not start until midnight and many young people would not sleep until dawn. It was largely expected that young people at the weekend and during holidays would not wake up until midday. From Saturday lunchtime through Sunday rhythms changed as these were days for rest. Shops and businesses were shut and only the farmers worked according to the requirements of the season and women worked in the homes.

Temporal frameworks demonstrated flexibility. The exact times that people ate, slept and even opened their shops or went to work, varied from day to day, according to the multiple and conflicting demands of the situation and the priority given at any particular time to each demand. Most main meals were usually cooked in large quantities and did not need to be eaten at any specific time, allowing considerable flexibility both with meal times and who arrived to eat. There were no licensing hours for the bars and restaurants, each opened and closed according to the demands of the customers, and to the relationship of customers with the owner.

Temporal rhythms were also influenced by the changing seasons. Winter days, with cold, rain and possibly snow, and darkness falling early, kept people inside their homes. Once the weather became warmer people took the opportunity to be outside, while in the heat of the summer and especially once schools closed for the three month



summer holiday, night time activities increased. Becoming dark by eight in the summer, a major part of children's play took place in the squares in the dark. Families went to the squares, especially at the weekends, after eight and usually stayed until midnight.

Apart from the seasonal changes in occupation, the fairly routine daily and weekly cycle was interrupted by a range of holidays, festivals and events, some national and some local. In one way or another, these took place in the town as a whole and could therefore be experienced by all the inhabitants, whether or not all participated actively (see *Appendix I* for a full description of events). These holidays were all celebrated on the date of the holiday, and were not transferred if they should fall on a Sunday. They were not regarded as just a day off work and the cause of the holiday was celebrated with the related rituals and traditions.

## **Summary**

Occupation is understood to be an indivisible part of the total situation which makes up daily life in the town of Melissa. This chapter has explored this situation within a framework of the spatial, temporal and social elements, while it is evident that these were interlinked, or rather, were in a transactional relationship. Time, place, people and occupation were part of one whole, mutually influencing and being influenced by, each other. This was a tightly knit community, socially in the ties of family and neighbourhood, physically through the narrow streets and shared public spaces, and temporally through time as people placed themselves in an ongoing temporal trajectory that originated in ancient Greece. People were used to being independent and decision makers, owning their own businesses and land, organising their daily tasks according to the demands of the situation, and taking part in local administration. They lived in close contact with the nature that was all around and in rhythm with the seasons, while taking part in the annual rituals and celebrations that marked the annual calendar.

This was the situation of which occupation was part. The discussion is inevitably partial and incomplete, while I have endeavoured to illustrate those elements which appeared most central to the emerging understanding of occupation. Further elements of the

situation will be necessarily incorporated in the following chapters which explore the plots of this narrative of the town, that is, explore the reasons with which people went about their daily lives and that underpinned occupation.

## **Chapter 6: Maintaining the Self-in-the-World**

This is the first of three chapters each of which will present a narrative of daily life in the town constructed around a particular plot. Each chapter will present a particular reason “with which” things are done, using Ricoeur’s (1986/2008, p.188) phrase to describe the practical and ongoing reasoning that underpins occupation in the town. This chapter presents the narrative ‘maintaining the self-in-the-world’.

### **Introducing the Plots of the Narrative**

As discussed, in the town of Melissa occupation came to be understood as a relational process which coordinates the ever changing and uncertain situation, maintaining harmony or balance between multiple and often conflicting dimensions. Maintaining balance incorporates a shared tacit understanding of what is usual, which forms part of the end-in-view towards which occupation is directed. This shared understanding and practical knowledge of everyday life, is evident in people’s ongoing choices, as they choose between this and that, now and later, awarding value to each possible action.

Analysis explored this tacit and practical understanding of what people held as important to preserve and maintain in daily life, within a narrative process of emplotment. Three potential plots were developed that illustrate what I understood to be important for the people of this town and what they were working to maintain. The three plots around which the narratives have been developed have as their central theme the idea of maintaining, and specifically: maintaining the self-in-the-world, maintaining the family, and maintaining the social fabric. These will be presented in this and the following two chapters.

The verb ‘to maintain’ incorporates the meaning: to keep in the existing state and to preserve from failure or decline, to sustain against danger or opposition, and to support

or provide for ("Maintain", 2013). Rather than a proactive drive towards the future, it includes a sense of concern with preserving the past and the present, which was an important part of the sense of the daily life of this town. It also conveys the tension I experienced when life was perceived as an *agóna* (fight), and people might respond "*palévoume*" (we are wrestling), when asked how something was going. Maintaining therefore incorporates questions such as maintaining what, for whom, against what forces. In using the word maintaining I also hope to express a certain degree of heaviness and functionality, an ongoing sense I experienced in the town that was expressed in the response frequently given to the question "*ti káneis?*" (how are you/ what are you doing?). The reply often took the form of a physical shrug, a lifting of the shoulders and a heavy "*ti na kánoume*" (what can we do/what is to be done), something in-between a question and a comment.

Maintaining is also linked to the idea of balance and a sense of balance or of ongoing balancing emerged between and within these three plots. Balance here is not understood as a linear balance between two opposites, but is multidimensional; a dynamic, fluid and fragile process occurring between multiple levels and dimensions. It incorporates the often conflicting demands between the self, the family and the social fabric, the physical and emotional self, and the metaphysical and the natural worlds. People maintained balance in their individual and varying ways, however, the shared importance of these three aspects described as plots, was a consistent thread that provided direction and meaning to occupation in the town.

As already introduced, this first chapter explores the process of maintaining the self-in-the-world. This includes not only an exploration of how individual needs were experienced and how occupation emerged in relation to the context around these, but also of how the self - 'me' - was understood and experienced as a coherent part of the natural and metaphysical world. These aspects will be presented as three separate threads of this narrative. First will be presented the understandings of the nature of the universe and people's place in it, which underpinned all aspects of daily life and led to a perception of the extent of one's power over maintaining one's self and the relative power of other forces. The second thread introduces ideas around taking care of one's self, including ideas around health, from basic survival needs to balancing the needs of body and soul with the demands of the environment. The third thread presents those

things that people seemed to understand that they just had to do and that they experienced as basic drivers of occupation, including, doing something, going out and being with others. Presented as separate threads for the purpose of discussion and analysis, they intertwine together to form the narrative 'maintaining the self-in-the-world'. To begin, I will introduce Mr. Nikos, the central character of this chapter.

## **Introducing Mr. Nikos**

I introduce Mr. Nikos here in a similar way to how I met him in the town.

*His whole face shone with pleasure and a deep, almost gleeful smile spread from ear to ear. With a small chuckle he repeated, "Yes 78, I am 78 year old. Nobody ever believes it". I did not even try to hide my amazement, partly because of his obvious pleasure in it, and partly because I could not have even if I had wanted to.*

*In early Spring I had been walking down the almost deserted former main street of the town, when I saw a man sitting outside the shoe shop on a small plastic stool. I had passed the shoe shop before but never been inside. The shop had always looked chaotic to me – men's, women's and children's shoes, wellington and walking boots, slippers and sandals in no apparent order, some on shelves and some laid out on piles of shoe boxes. Now, an oldish man, dressed in a tweed jacket over a cream checked shirt and dark trousers, was sitting outside in the sun.*

*When I approached he smiled at me cheerfully, and I immediately noticed his smooth tanned face and his bright chirpy eyes. He reminded me of a curious robin. My opening conversation, telling him of my interest in getting to know people, of their lives and their health, had led to his insistent question "how old do you think I am?"*

*He patted the small plastic stool next to him and invited me to sit down. We sat in the warm sun and he started to tell me what over the weeks he repeated and expanded upon, and which I came to call 'his secret of a long life'.*

In continuation I present a vignette of Mr. Nikos, constructed from field notes, which illustrates the three interweaving threads, already introduced, that are important in the town regarding maintaining one's self and around which the discussion in this chapter will be structured.

*Mr. Nikos arrived at his shop before eight o'clock each morning, except Sunday. Despite his age he did not want to stop working, he said: "I have been working in this shop for 55 years. I am happy and like what I do, I like being with people, I like them all and they like me. I don't want to stop working, what would I do at home all day?"*

*He opened his shop in accordance with local regulations, but frequently opened before eight o'clock, because "often a worker finds he needs a pair of boots, and he can't wait till later, he will miss his day's wage" As well as selling shoes from his shop, he went regularly on Sundays, with his van piled high with shoe boxes, to sell to the people in surrounding villages. He enjoyed it; the people expected him and would look out for him coming. It also gave him the opportunity to buy local produce including wine, honey, olive oil, and cheese (feta), and sometimes he collected xórta (greens) from the fields.*

*He told me he was careful about what he ate both regarding quality but also regarding quantity – both factors he considered important for his long and healthy life. "Honey is very good for you, if you eat it on an empty stomach first thing in the morning. I get fruit and vegetables from the street market. I collect xórta (greens) and my wife also goes, and sometimes I buy them. And the meat, the beef, I also get from the villages around, it is all fine (special), as is the wine", and "I often drink tea in the morning, tea with mint or honey. Our mountain tea, it is the best, it is aromatic, people bring it for me". He showed me the fruit he kept in his fridge in the shop and told me how much he ate each day. He also kept in the fridge small cakes (gluká) and in the summer ice creams, both for himself and to offer visitors.*

*He also took care of his health in other ways. In winter, he protected himself from the cold of the shop, the 'cave' as he called it, by wrapping up warmly. He showed me how he was wearing a brushed cotton shirt and wool jumper under his tweed sports jacket, over which he wore an anorak in the winter. He said he didn't get ill, although he*

*“hadn’t managed to avoid the arthritis – but what can you expect with the damp”. In the spring he sat outside the shop, warming himself in the sun, with an empty stool next to him for anyone passing by to stop and have a chat. In the summer he moved his stool to the shade of the buildings opposite.*

*In the summer he always had baths in the sea and thermal springs. In September he told me that he had done twelve sea baths and then sixteen thermal baths at the springs. He fitted them in by going over to the sea and having one bath in the evening, before staying the night in his house over there, and then had another in the morning before driving back to the village to open his shop. The thermal baths were good for his arthritis, “after 55 years in the damp of the shop...”*

*He also believed that other factors supported his good health: “Everybody thinks I am 60 to 65 years old, and when they hear 78...I have a good life, I have never stayed up all night, oh, although we had many parties, but I have never over indulged, as they say, I neither smoke or drink. I will eat well and afterwards I will drink what I drink (a glass or two)”. He also said how he tried not to worry, how ághos (anxiety/stress) was not good for you. He sometimes told me about people in the village who had too much ághos - a woman who had put on weight, a young man who was said to have ‘psychological problems’.*

*At Easter I saw him in one of the local churches, he was chanting. When I next saw him he told me proudly that there had been a lot of people at the church, and that he chanted regularly. “I am a chanter in the church every Sunday and on holy days. I have a good voice, I like to sing. And I believe, I have always believed, God watches over me, but you have to help yourself too. I also sing in the choir of the Association, and we often go out on Wednesday after the choir, to eat a souvlaki and have a glass of wine”. He also told me “And I like to walk, I don’t like to sit in the house doing nothing. I walk to the shop and I walk to the square on Sunday for the newspapers. I also like to go to collect greens, and I have a kitchen garden at the house where I have planted various things”.*

*Towards the end of the summer I saw him again. I told him he was looking well and he told me “mi me matiáseis” (don’t put the evil eye on me). I realized he was serious and*

*remembered that I have been told that the colour of my eyes (towards blue) meant this might be possible. I said “ftou ftou ftou”, the ritual triple ‘spitting’ that wards off evil.*

*Over the following winter as the economic crisis developed Mr. Nikos was alternatively anxious or angry when we talked. He was worried about his children and potential cuts in their salaries, and he was worried about the reduced business in the shop that meant he could not cover his expenses, particularly national insurance payments. He worried about closing his shop; he had had it all his life, and liked being out doing things with people. He said “I have never had my coffee at home”. He was angry with the government who were “selling us out”. In between talking of his worries and his anger he commented how he knew that such ághos (anxiety) was not good for him, but “I never thought it would come to this”.*

In this vignette Mr. Nikos clearly described his need to keep doing, to be with other people, and to be out and about in the world. He also described specific activities that he believed to be important for his health such as eating good quality fresh food, exercise and bathing. However, he also expressed an understanding of the need for not ‘over-doing it’, the dangers of anxiety, and his deep religious faith that underpinned his occupation. The following sections will discuss further these various elements, introducing a number of further characters who will add the voice of their experiences to the discussion (see *Appendix D* for a brief description of some of the townspeople). The first thread explores people’s understanding of the world and their place in it.

## **Understanding the World**

The total situation that made up everyday life in the town included not only the immediate and observable elements but also metaphysical elements such as people’s understandings of the forces guiding the world. These understandings, the worldview of the people of the town, included their shared beliefs and values around the nature of the universe including the nature of one’s self, beliefs regarding God, the purpose of life and death, and an understanding of the relationship between the elements, especially God, man and nature (Watson, 2006).



This understanding was an inextricable part of how people lived their lives and the values that they assigned to their own and other's occupation. The whole sense of maintaining, of keeping and preserving rather than taking deliberate steps towards a planned future, was in part the result of a sense of what was possible for each individual to control whether that was spiritual, natural or social. At the same time maintaining one's self in that particular world demanded certain occupation.

Mr. Nikos, like most people, had a deep faith in God. He frequently reminded me "*me proséhi*" (*he is watching over me/taking care of me*). 'God willing' was commonly added to the end of any conversation around plans for the future; acknowledging that while one might plan, ultimately what the future held was not in one's own hands, there being forces unknown and more powerful than oneself. The Greek Orthodox Church is a mystical religion, encouraging the believer to experience the presence of God as the spiritual essence of the universe, guiding the overall happenings of the world (Fotiou, 2000).

That there is a pattern to the world, and particularly the idea of an allotted lifespan, has been discussed since the writings of Homer (Raphals, 2003), and was expressed in the town in the idea of *moíra* (fate or destiny). *Oi Moíres* (the Fates) of Ancient Greek mythology were usually represented as three female figures controlling the thread of life of all mortals. Katerina, a married woman in her mid 40s, told me about her uncle who she had 'lost' to a heart attack (had died) since I had last seen her:

*He had had a heart operation about three months previously and one morning had felt some discomfort and had gone back to the cardiac hospital where they told him there was no obvious problem. A little later in the day, standing outside a shop window, he dropped dead. She told me: "you see, whatever you do, it will find you if it is your time".*

Linked to the idea of *moíra* was the idea of *týchi* (luck or fortune). *Týchi* was the ancient Greek god of fortune and so when people described something that happened as *týchi* they implied not that it was lucky but that it was fated (du Boulay, 2009). That something happened by *týchi* was commonly expressed, usually used to explain isolated events, with *moíra* used to describe the idea of a prescribed life course.

The concept of the evil eye also demonstrated the idea of forces moving the events of the world beyond the understanding of the individual. The concept has been understood in various ways in Greece, including being linked to *moíra* and *týchi*, used symbolically around issues of social marginalisation, and linked to health (Herzfeld, 1981). In the town, *mátiasma* (the casting of the evil eye) was used by many people to explain malaise, particularly sudden headaches and feelings of general ill health. Someone known to be skilled in *ksemátiasma* (casting out the evil eye) would be called on (sometimes by telephone) to deal with the situation. As Mr. Nikos' exclamation to me indicated, *mátiasma* was believed to be linked to envy, and care had to be taken when giving compliments.

Religious beliefs intertwined with ideas about *moíra*. One day I met Mr. Nikos and he told me that he had had a car crash:

*"Last Friday I was going over to the sea. After the little church there is that bend, and I don't know what it was, it had been raining a bit so maybe it was a bit wet, or maybe the tire burst, but anyway I ended up with that front wheel in the ditch and the back one so much in the air". [He demonstrated with his hands a distance of about 15 centimetres]. He carried on "but I didn't suffer any injury, and the car was fine. God was watching over me. I have always been religious, and I know God is watching over me". He told me how he had had another accident a few years previously in his van on the saint's day of Agios Sotirios, again without suffering an injury. "The whole thing had tipped over – a VW – which don't tip" [as he said]. "Since then I never work on that day, I have put a shrine at the spot and keep the candle lit. And now this happened on the eve of that day - it's not by luck/chance. I had the Virgin Mary with me".*

Mr. Nikos not only clearly described his belief that God was watching over him, but also told of occupation that emerged through his belief together with the social and religious rituals of the Church. After the first crash he had placed a small shrine (*proskynētári*) at the spot and kept the candle lit within it, symbolising his faith and his thanks. Such shrines are constructed throughout Greece both in the case of a person being killed in an accident, or, as in this case, having survived (Panourgia, 1995). Like many Greek Orthodox believers, he crossed himself when passing a church or chapel, "I always make my cross" he told me on several occasions.

While God symbolised the whole spiritual world, and Mr. Nikos primarily thanked Him, it was the *Panayía* (Virgin Mary) and Saint Sotirios who he believed had saved his life. People frequently turned for support with day to day needs (both major and minor) to the saints and to the Virgin Mary, sometimes including making a *táma* (promise or vow). Martha, a woman in her mid 40s shared with me a story of when she had appealed for help to Saint Fanoúrios, a saint particularly associated with helping people, mainly women, find lost objects.

*Martha had gone with her adult son and nephews to one of their fields to water some plants. As she watered she could see the others moving going back and forth, and finally she asked what had happened. Her son explained that he had dropped the car keys, and the only other set was in Athens. They searched and searched but the particular area was full of rubble. In the end she started a prayer to Saint Fanourios, and just as she was finishing saying "if you help find the keys we will go now, now to the church to light a candle" - she spotted the keys on the ground in front of her. Her amazement at this event was obvious, and she described how, just as she had barely finished promising, they went straight to the church and lit a candle to the saint. Since then, each year on this saint's day (27th August) she made a fanourópitta (special cake/pie of Fanoúrios) and took it to the church. She said there are always lots of cakes made - many people appeal to this particular saint.*

As this story demonstrated, when occupation was perceived to be particularly troublesome or difficult for the individual to manage alone, help was requested from the spiritual world in the form of a *táma*. In the case of help with a particularly serious situation, for example recovery from serious illness or a child born to a previously infertile couple, the *táma* might be an annual trip to a major shrine. With more mundane concerns, such as the situation Martha described, a candle was lit or other offering made.

People perceived themselves to be part of a world that included powers or forces beyond their own. Religious faith was part of this, providing both an overall meaning to the world beyond the understanding of the individual and supporting people in their *agóna* (struggle or fight) of daily occupation. Martha, sitting in her home one evening, remarked: "everyone must believe in something, otherwise how can you live?".

Belief, through the teachings of the Church, led the individual to engage in particular forms of occupation, as demonstrated by Martha and Mr. Nikos. Particular roles and tasks also emerged, for example a number of men were chanters, like Mr. Nikos, in one of the four local churches, and women of each parish kept the church clean and prepared the small chapels when they would be used for a particular service. Church holidays and saints days were also celebrated and although from 1982 it was no longer legally compulsory for children to be baptized, couples married and funeral services held in church, these practices continued at the time of the fieldwork. The church also stipulated days of fasting throughout the year (see *Appendix 1*). However, the actual doing of these fast days, the way they were incorporated in occupation, demonstrated Church understandings particularly regarding the nature of person and their relationship with the spiritual world.

The Orthodox Church does not follow Augustine's doctrine of original sin, rather the human self is seen to be by nature good, but can sin by the same conditions that led to Adam's fall, that is, by the misuse of free choice (Gassin & Muse, 2006). People are therefore seen to be created with the possibility to sin, but whether one does or not is up to the individual (du Boulay, 2009). There emerges a sense, evident in occupation, that while people may misuse their possibility to make choices (and even an expectation that they will do so) they should try to live a life as close to God and the spiritual world as possible. Therefore fasting was not a guilt-driven attempt of sinners demonstrating their worth, but was an attempt by the spiritually weak to be closer to God. This importance of trying, rather than a focus only on the result, was explored in the following discussion:

*Shortly before Easter one year Litsa told me that she had been talking to one of the local priests about fasting, discussing with him why and if it really mattered whether or not you ate red meat. She said that he told her that fasting was not only about avoiding red meat and blood products. He had explained that rather it was about self-control, and how that was an important thing to practice.*

I did not meet anyone who kept consistently one of the major fast periods which lasted 50 days, although there was general sense that 'it was good to try'. People rarely ate meat on Wednesdays and Fridays, but this seemed to be interwoven with knowledge of

a healthy diet. Letta told me they always had pulses or fish on those days, “*apart from nistía (fasting), it’s good for the children to not eat meat all the time*”. In a similar way people did not attend for the whole of the liturgies, even funeral services, attending for part, as they wanted and was convenient.

Occupation reflected understandings and beliefs around the spiritual world not only in the specific practices and rituals, but also in the underpinning sense that permeated much of everyday doing, of ‘trying’ without the guilt of being unable to succeed.

As well as the Church’s active presence in community life as a prominent institution, it was also interrelated in the structures of other, usually secular, institutions. This was given specific form in the *ayiasmós* (blessing), which was an essential part of any public ceremony: at the beginning of the school year, at the annual cutting of the *vassilópitta* (New Year cake) by the many Associations in the town, at the opening of a new building or memorial. In addition the priest was invited to conduct an *ayiasmós* of a new business, and some people also arranged for the priest to bless the home annually, and occasionally more frequently at times of need. Such blessings illustrated but also reinforced belief in the essential unity of all material things, people and God, and the essential role of God in supporting not only people but also the material aspects of their doings.

To summarise, religious teachings, belief and daily occupation intermingled throughout the days and year, perhaps mirroring the Orthodox view of an essential harmony between person, nature and God (Fotiou, 2000). Occupation reconstructed Church related practices and permitted the expression of belief, but also expressed the habitual understandings of the nature of the world and the person in it. Spiritual beliefs felt comfortably integrated throughout occupation together with the idea of ‘trying’ and the absence of guilt. This interlinking of belief, religious practices and everyday material life, in this case running a business, is illustrated in the following excerpt:

*It was Wednesday of Easter week and I was walking up the steep main street when I saw Letta outside her husband’s flower and gift shop. She told me she had been up very early as her husband, Stathis, had gone to Athens at five to pick up the flowers for the Epitáphios [the symbolic bier of Christ that was carried around the parish on*

*Good Friday]. She explained that he provided the flowers for all the Epitáphios' in the district. They had spent 5000 euro on the flowers, and it was always a busy time but also with a good deal of anxiety that all would go well. [I found myself thinking that Stathis must be managing his business well to have all the orders for the district, but I was surprised by what Letta said next:] "And of course he does himself the flowers for St. Petros [the nearest church]. Did you see them last year; he had done all green and white orchids. But he has a good eye". Later in the day I saw Stathis, and he told me: "Last year I tried it with white and green orchids, there were beautiful but with the lighting they didn't show up so well. This year I am going to try something else, something brighter – just wait and see". He was intense and moved as he talked about this occupation, perhaps touched a little by the mystery of the Good Friday service. The following evening the Epitáphios was an exotic mass of pink and purple orchids, intermixed with numerous other flowers. Stathis walked close behind.*

Since the mid 1990s in Northern America, spirituality has re-entered the occupational literature as part of the attempt to regain a more holistic view of the person, which had been lost to some degree within biomedical practice (Christiansen, 1997) and the increasing secularism of many Western countries. The Canadian Model of Occupational Performance (Law et al., 1997; Townsend & Polatajko, 2007) places spirituality, understood to express the essence of the individual, at the centre of occupational performance. In this model, spirituality and occupation, as in much of the literature, are seen to be linked; through occupation the individual expresses their spirituality, but spirituality is also how the individual experiences meaning in everyday life (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2008; Howard & Howard, 1997; Wilding, May, & Muir-Cochrane, 2004).

In the town the sense was not only of a spirituality that resided within the individual, as in much of the literature mentioned, but of a spiritual world that ran through, and was an element of all parts of the total situation. The Orthodox Church supports an understanding of an interpersonal relationship between the person, nature and God, otherwise the individual, the material and the spiritual worlds, where all parts mingle and intersect, and teaches of the importance of harmony between the elements (Fotiou, 2000). The unique individual is viewed as a trichotomy of body, soul and spirit, where the spirit is the part dedicated to the kind of perceiving that is capable of

communion with the spiritual world (Gassin & Muse, 2006). The spirit in Greek Orthodoxy is therefore not so much concerned with the essence of the individual that may be expressed through occupation, but that the unified person (spirit, soul and body) is able to achieve harmony with the essence of the world.

Much of the cultural criticism of occupational therapy has focused on the Western understanding of the individual as separate from his or her context and with power over it, and how this culturally situated understanding is not relevant in other, and specifically Eastern cultures (Iwama, 2006). It is evident from the preceding discussion that people in the town perceived themselves to be part of a world in which there were other forces, beyond and before themselves: "God willing" was added to any discussion of plans for the future, admiring someone opened them to the risk of the evil eye, while death was a matter of it being your time. This perception of the world did not lead to an urgent performance of religious or other practices, that has been discussed in relation to other religions, for example Judaism (Frank et al., 1997), nor to a passive acceptance of all being in the hands of fate or God. The individual was both object and subject of the spiritual world (du Boulay, 2009). People were expected to take care of their body and soul, to live in community with others, with their environment and with God, and to do the best they could to achieve this, while failings were inevitable and forgivable. At the same time it was understood that there were things beyond comprehension, and beyond human power to change or control. "*Exei o Theós*" ("God has") was a common expression used in the sense of 'His will be done': with the means to provide and the means to take away. People were responsible for what they could deal with, which was focused on the present and the achievable.

This first narrative thread regarding understandings of the nature of the world and the person's place in it, will now be linked to a second thread which will explore the embodied experience of living in the world on a day to day basis - taking care of the body and soul.

## Care of the Body and Soul

In Orthodox terms, the body and soul are integral parts of the person, and like the spirit are carriers of God's image. The soul consists of the mind, emotions and will, and is indivisible from the body (Fotiou, 2000). As discussed in the previous section body and soul are intimately involved in worship, for example through fasting, but they also need to be cared for (Gassin & Muse, 2006) and this is the aspect that will be considered in this thread. The discussion will focus on three interrelated aspects: firstly surviving well, secondly being careful, staying safe and staying healthy and finally balancing body and soul in the environment. While focusing on the body and soul, the spiritual self remains an integral part of the whole.

### Surviving well.

In the town, as for people throughout the world, people fundamentally maintained their self through eating, drinking and protecting themselves from the physical environment. However, this was not just the mundane care of the physical body but incorporated the needs of the soul and was a central element of what was seen as a good life. I asked Mr. Kosta, a regular attendee at the KAPI, what he believed to be important for a good life, and he replied without hesitation: "*na fas, na peis, na glentás, na tragoudás, kai....sex*" ("to eat, to drink, to have fun, to sing, and ...sex") – saying the word sex almost under his breath.

The landscape of the town communicated a social norm (Cutchin 2007) around fresh food. It supported development of the habit (in Dewian terms) of gathering, fattening, harvesting, preparing, serving, eating, thinking and talking about local, quality foods. The ongoing selection of quality ingredients by the local people ensured the ongoing production of local oil, wine and honey, as well as the support of the three butchers and three vegetable and fruit shops in the town, the weekly street market and the daily round of the fresh fish van.

Mr. Nikos, while not a farmer, had a *perivóli* (kitchen garden) and olive trees. He also regularly obtained fresh, locally produced foods. The small fridge in his shop was always full of fruit and he always offered me something: "*Take it, take it*" he said,



thrusting the gift into my hands. Food was not only about survival, but also about re-establishing connections with others, and these aspects will be discussed in the following chapters. While enacted in different ways and to a varying extent by each individual this importance of quality food was also suggested by the virtual absence of ready meals in the supermarket fridges, the absence of fast food shops except for the traditional *souvláki* and homemade cheese and spinach pies sold by the bakers, and the ongoing discussions around food, its quality and availability.

Martha, like many mothers, packed up food parcels for her children living away, even for her daughter who lived abroad: *“Well, of course she’d always take oil, at least one big coca cola bottle full. And meat too, because we weren’t really sure about the meat, there had been that mad cow disease. And Maria wasn’t too keen on buying the meat there. And once I even packed eggs for her, and not one broke, I packed them so well”*.

Martha, like many of the townspeople also made use the countryside as a rich source of food. One Easter she took me to collect wild asparagus, while, like other people, she collected snails, camomile, oregano and of course *xórta* (greens). Collecting *xórta* was a common occupation after the spring and autumn rains, when the countryside changed almost overnight and at the edges of fields and in pastures a vast assortment of dandelion-type plants - *xórta* - would appear. In the fields around the town I would see people stooped over, plastic supermarket bag or basket in one hand, sharp vegetable knife in the other, cutting off the tops of these plants. Men and women of all ages collected *xórta* and had a rich local knowledge of the good areas to pick it, and which should be avoided as farmers had sprayed chemical fertilisers. Once home you cut off any of the root still attached to the stalk, and washed the leaves thoroughly. Some types were best eaten boiled, cooled and dressed with oil and lemon. Others, more aromatic, were good for pies.

I was concerned to understand why so many people collected *xórta*. It was not simply to collect food, and one woman who collected *xórta* almost daily told me that she did not eat so much and gave most away. She explained that it was to do with being outside, with the rhythmic movements and *“I like it, I just like it, I feel good/right when I’m doing it”*.

I came to understand more clearly what she meant one autumn when I went with a friend to collect walnuts. The tree was beautiful, large green leaves, tall, standing alone, towards the edge of the river. The ground around it was covered with fallen walnuts. We collected these first, and then using sticks to bang the lower branches, gathered more as they fell. We trudged home through the fields each of us with two bags of walnuts. It was an immensely satisfying task, the physical effort combined with the fresh air and the beauty of the setting, together with a strong sense of the direct link from nature, through my own occupation, to supplying my own food, the most basic of needs. I experienced body, soul and nature balanced through the occupation of collecting food.

In conversations with many people the same sense emerged. For example, Michaelis, a young farmer, told me one morning that he had just been up the mountain: *"I was up there by eight, it was such a beautiful morning, I woke up and just thought, I have to go. I picked tea. Have you had our tea? You really should try it, there's nothing like it"*. Gardening and being in nature have been associated with spirituality, getting in touch with the cycle of nature and taking care of the emotional and spiritual aspects of the person as well as the physical (Unruh & Hutchinson, 2011), and this was evident in such occupation.

The historical relationship between the people of the town and food was an additional factor contributing to the acute consciousness of quality food. The older townspeople, who had experienced the German occupation of the town during World War II, held within their bodies the physical and emotional experience (Aldrich & Cutchin, 2012) of food shortages if not actual starvation. Mr. Nikos told me that his family was fortunate because his shoe-making father was paid in bread by the Germans, but several people told me of the 'coffee' they used to make from grinding the nuts of the *pournári* (wild holly bush). The emerging economic crisis revived these embodied memories, with images of soup kitchens in Athens on television. People discussed their own situation. From most I gained a sense that they felt they would always be alright. As an agricultural community the farmers and herders had not only the land but the habitual skills and knowledge not only of specific techniques but of vulnerability to, and hardship caused by, crops damaged by disease and extreme weather conditions. They had always lived within an uncertain context and had learnt to recognize opportunity, to be

flexible, and to survive. Mr Stathis, a tall farmer in his 80s, told me how in the town there was no reason why anyone would ever starve – anyone who had any land could always grow enough food to live on. He described his own *perivóli* (kitchen garden) – he had hens, rabbits, goats, pigeons, and vegetables – and he grew enough to feed all his family.

Little reference was made to water and perhaps the abundant springs throughout the town and the river that flowed through the centre of the valley, did not cause uncertainty regarding its availability which would bring this habitual aspect of daily life to consciousness (Cutchin & Dickie, 2012). Burst or leaking pipes reducing the supply led to frustration towards the municipality for incompetence but not anxiety about survival.

People also rarely talked about their homes, which were traditionally inherited and few people paid rent. Therefore, the home was largely taken for granted and it was only when a particular event occurred, for example, if a tile came loose on the roof or a boiler needed repair, that there arose a need for discussion and occupation. The changing seasons also demanded specific occupation. For example, carpets were taken up, washed and stored during the hot summer months, and laid down again for the winter. In September, fallen and dead trees were legally gathered from any public area (particularly the mountain) and were stored for burning in the stoves or fireplaces over the winter. But the main source of heating was oil or electricity run central heating causing a reliance on not only national but global economic structures. Prices of heating oil, that had been subsidised, rose by over 100% during the course of the study. Finishing the field work at the end of August of 2011, frequent conversations were already taking place about how people would manage in the winter to come.

Wilcock (1993) writing on the human need for occupation, argued that an important function of occupation is to ensure survival, that is, the “immediate bodily needs of sustenance, self care and shelter” (p. 20). In the town body and soul, the physical and the emotional, were not independent of each other and food and shelter responded to these joint needs. The named occupation in the town that was primarily responsible for satisfying these needs was *dhouleíá* (work, job, task). Used with a broader conceptualisation than that usually associated with the word work in English (Sutton,

1986), the word *dhouleiá* (pl. *dhouleiés*) was used for both paid work and household jobs, and generally for almost anything that 'needed' to be done by both sexes and all age groups.

*Dhouleiés* were the primary means of satisfying basic needs and so important in the occupational process of maintaining one's self. Perhaps due to the non-industrialised nature of Greek society as a whole and the largely self-employed and mainly farming population of the town, paid work was not referred to as something separate from all the other *dhouleiés* of everyday life. *Dhouleiés* supported the basic needs of the self as discussed in this chapter but were also important in maintaining the family and the social fabric, discussed in the following chapters.

Generally there was a sense that *dhouleiés* should be done first before other more enjoyable activities or rest. Women who were not in paid employment usually did their *dhouleiés* first thing in the morning and then later in the afternoon after the midday rest. I also often saw older men going to do some *dhouleiés* at their *perivóli* or to pay a bill before going for their mid-morning coffee.

Of course, doing paid work was vital, primarily in order to have enough income to buy essentials. A number of people commented on their work, as Elisabeth here: "*of course we work. Unfortunately they're not handing out money yet. We need to survive*". Work was primarily done in order to be able to maintain oneself and one's family. The choice of higher education, training and work were all usually based on the anticipated financial reward and the availability of work, and with less attention to the character or interests of the individual.

Work patterns were similar to those described as typical in pre-industrial society in Western Europe (Schor, 1991), that is, with flexible working rhythms throughout the year, aiming to achieve a fairly steady level of income. At certain times work demands were high. For example, during the summer months, farmers regularly checked their watering systems throughout the day and night. Mr. Nikos had a stall at the annual bazaar in a number of towns, which meant that for five days he both worked (at least a 12 hour day) and slept at the stall. Anna, owner of a *kafé/taverna*, slept for less than three hours a night during busy periods, staying open until the last customer left and

opening again at six in the morning. Changing demands, for example, for private lessons for a child, also led to attempts to increase income through working longer hours or taking on extra work.

However these periods of intense work were balanced by much quieter periods, where the extra income made during the busy times balanced with the loss of income from the quiet times, but also when there was time to recover from the intense physical demands. People discussed the need to have a period of rest - *na kratáme tis isoropeíes* (to keep the balances). Hard physical work, while understood to be essential at times, was seen to pose a potential risk to the body and people were encouraged to take care and to not work too hard.

*Dhouleíés* (work/jobs) were the main means by which the individual fulfilled survival needs of sustenance and shelter. These were needs primarily of the body, while certain aspects of *dhouleíés* could also provide considerable emotional satisfaction, for example, the pleasure of eating new fruit in season, harvesting olives in family groups, enjoying the comfort and warmth of one's home. A second strand will now be added to this narrative thread of taking care of the body and soul, which discusses more directly ideas around health.

### **Being careful, staying safe, staying healthy.**

Maintaining the self did not only include eating, drinking and having shelter. It also included staying healthy. Good health was wished for first and foremost: "*ugeía pan' ap' óla*" (health before everything), and was asked after and cared for. Health was primarily understood as the opposite of illness and disease and full use was made of the medical system for regular checkups and ongoing care. However, health was also understood in a wider sense incorporating the understood and lived importance of the unified body and soul of the individual with the environment. Here health was not a retrospective view backwards from illness but included an unlimited, expanding notion of ongoing health promotion (Alter, 1999), a way of living with the world that was 'good'. Understood in this way health was a complex web of inter-related factors. There was a sense that it was always at risk and needed to be monitored, including taking care and being safe, awareness of health promoting activities, the importance of being in touch

with one's whole self (body and soul) and the importance of balance.

Life was sometimes described in terms of being an *agóna* (a struggle or fight). For example, farming required intense physical effort, engagement with hard, stony ground, with weather conditions and physical dangers beyond the control of the individual. Maintaining the self involved being careful in order to stay safe.

Physical dangers were inherent in the extreme weather conditions and occupation was adjusted to account for both icy conditions in winter and the heat in summer. Mr. Nikos showed me the warm clothing he wore in winter, while in the summer he sat outside in the shade. With snow most people stayed inside and the schools closed to guard against accidents. In the summer farmers avoided working in the middle of the day, and took plenty of water to drink with them, one commented: "*you can never be too careful, always better to have too much than too little with you*". In the heat of the summer, like the inhabitants of the town, I found myself walking more slowly, in the shade whenever possible, and doing all my *dhouleiés* (jobs) in the early morning or late evening. The weather was understood to be a powerful force and a potential threat to health, and there was an ongoing adjustment of occupation in response to it.

Lack of care in the environment could also lead to injuries and children were told not to run, to be careful of slipping and pregnant women and older people were scolded for taking risks. There was a conservative, protective attitude to occupation, and taking care was admired. Keeping healthy and staying safe was perhaps embodied in the experience of growing up in the community where medical services were limited and support from the state minimal. While currently there was a health centre in the town providing emergency and ongoing care, the financial consequences of illness or injury remained significant.

The physical environment and the changing and often extreme weather conditions required a continually responsive flexibility of occupation to enable people to maintain themselves, to fulfill their basic survival needs and to stay healthy. However, the physical environment was also perceived to be a benchmark for an environment that provided quality of life and opportunities for health promoting occupation.

Health promoting occupations, such as healthy eating, bathing and walking, emerged through successful transactions involving the potentially health supporting elements of the environment (fresh food, sea, thermal springs and mountain) and the individual. Mr. Nikos walked as much as he could throughout the week, and also believed in the importance of baths in the sea and thermal springs. His understanding of the importance of these for health was echoed by many people. For example, Frances was looking forward to July when the coach would start day trips to the beach. *“I hope I’ll manage at least ten baths – that’s the minimum you need really, isn’t it?”* she asked me. Mrs Dimitra was told by her orthopaedic surgeon to make sure she did 30 sea baths in the summer following her hip replacement. These baths usually included little swimming, rather people would stand in the water chatting to each other – the actual transaction of body and water was what was considered to be health giving. The understood importance of sports had led to the establishment of the facilities in the town, and parents encouraged their children to participate, while some women walked circuits of the football pitch for exercise.

However, really living, living well, was to live with one’s *psixí* (soul). Orthodoxy teaches that the *psixí* encompasses all psychological functions and the vitality of the body (Gassin & Muse, 2006). This sense was echoed in everyday speech when the word was used to refer to those occasions when something was experienced with the whole of one’s being. Litsa, moved by a young man’s singing, commented *“he is singing with his psixí”*.

To live with one’s *psixí* was to experience one’s whole self in one’s occupation, and was a vital part of ‘really living’. Costa illustrated this clearly in a conversation we had one day, discussing the way of life in Canada, a country he visited regularly to see his daughter. He commented with frustration: *“there, where my daughter lives, they don’t know how to live. They do everything by the clock, everything is organised. That is no way to live, where is the psixí in that? Life isn’t just work, it’s friends, it’s other things...”*

Going out and seeing friends were important for enabling expression of one’s *psixí*, while *kéfi* was, perhaps, its optimum expression. Loosely translated as fun, mirth and spirits, *kéfi* was the optimum state that one could come into (*Irthe se kéfi*), usually during an evening out. It was heavily reliant on the context as the music, the behaviour

and mood of one's *paréa* (companions/gang) and the other people present, together created an atmosphere in which it was possible to experience *kéfi*. It was not necessarily related to alcohol consumption but rather entailed entering what could almost be called a liminal phase (Turner, 1986), a phase which would bring one in touch with one's soul, encounter oneself anew, before returning to the mundane world.

The older men, for example Mr. Simos and Mr. Nikos, recalled the evenings they had with their *paréa* (companions), the good time they had, the *kéfi...*. Younger people did not use the word so frequently, but the idea of going out and having a good time, a chance to *ksepsáso* (break out) from the week's *dhouleiés* was central to weekend entertainment.

As this discussion of *kéfi* begins to explore, taking care of the body and soul included the idea of balance - balance between the body, soul and spirit of the person within their environment.

### **Balancing body and soul in the environment.**

Taking care of the body and soul became possible within a careful transaction with the context, characterised by moderation and by balance. Mr. Nikos not only talked about his healthy diet, exercise and sea baths, but also about the need for moderation. He thought it important to 'not overdo things', not only in relation to eating and drinking, but also in regard to not being too 'wild'. Like many people, he also talked about the need to avoid *ághos kai stenaxóries* (anxiety and upsets), which emerged from the excessive demands of the environment and the person's vulnerability.

The concept of moderation was present in Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics and his idea of the golden mean (Sheldon, Cummins, & Kamble, 2010), and the words "nothing in excess" are inscribed at the temple at Delphi, situated in the same region as the town. The Orthodox teachings of the interconnectedness of person, God and nature (Chliaoutakis et al., 2002), the dangers of free-choice which if misused can disturb the person as a unified whole, and the life-long struggle to be close to God (Gassin & Muse, 2006), encouraged each person to engage in a process of considered care of self that would facilitate harmony with nature and God.



Due in part to these religious teachings a particular sense emerged of the person in the world that influenced the quality of occupation. Moderation in such things as food, wine and partying was the expected social norm, if not always observed. There was also awareness of the risks associated with too much physical and mental stress that were seen to push the person beyond what were healthy limits leading to *ághos kai stenaxóries* (anxiety and upset) and even illness. People tried to live within their perceived sense of their body's natural tempo and strength, and this was monitored, while a difference in people's inherent capacity to cope was also recognised. Balance was maintained whenever possible between the demands of body, soul and environment.

Mrs. Dimitra's comments regarding a woman of about 40 years old who died suddenly one summer, demonstrated this integration of physical and emotional stress with ideas around illness. While not ignoring the woman's physical ill-health, she commented: *"of course she worked very hard, what with her business and she had several children, and of course you don't know what goes on in another person's house.... But she had a difficult life, she had her sadness/upsets and she worked very hard, who knows...?"*

Health, a good awareness of one's body and happiness were seen to be inter-linked. Ariadne, a tall, well dressed woman in her 50's, who had recently experienced psychosomatic symptoms due to stress, described her understanding of health to me in the following way.

*"Nobody is healthy if they don't experience it, for themselves, com-plet-ly [drawn out with emphasis]. That is connected with the definition of happiness. What is happiness? When each person feels that he is in good contact with his body and his psixí.*

*That is, three parts, our spirit, our sentiment, and our body, all of those must be in balance, when we don't have that nothing works. I wasn't healthy with so much stress. And it was logical that it would erupt/break out...So now I have to have better contact with my emotions, and ...yes... with my spirit..."*

When I asked her about the cause of her stress, she told me it was caused by *“the norms of society, we press ourselves and we are driven there. If they had left us a little bit freer we would have found ourselves...”*

Ariadne clearly expressed her understanding of the transactional nature of the relationship between the context, particularly societal expectations and the three-part self (body, soul and spirit).

The oldest man in the village at the time (he died just after I completed this study) was 104 years old. A number of people referred to him when I asked them what they considered to be the components of a healthy and good life.

*Makis commented: “of course he has never worked and he never had any stenaxóries (upsets). He must have been born in about 1905, and has seen so much, but he never worked and never had any real problems”.*

Toula and Sofia told me they thought genes were the secret of his long life - his parents and brothers were all long lived, but also referred to his lifestyle, Toula saying: *“well I couldn’t really ever say that eixe stenaxorithí (he had upsets). He was never married, never had any children, he didn’t have any money problems and he didn’t really have to work”.*

Endeavouring to live in tune with one’s body and *psixí* and balancing these with the demands of context, was evident in occupation. As already discussed there was a perceived need to be careful of too much physically hard work and when this was essential, to balance such times with periods of rest and relaxation. People were aware of their body’s strengths and limitations, and that people’s physical rhythms varied, and therefore would do things at different speeds and have different levels of endurance. *Martha talked about being busy and how she always did everything ‘fast’. “Not that I rush things”, she explained, “I just do everything very fast. My grandmother was the same. Maria [her daughter] complains that she cannot keep up with my rhythms”.*

The influence and potential threat of the context to natural rhythms was discussed. The slower (than urban centers) pace of life was an important part of the perceived

quality of life in the town, an idea also discussed theoretically in the literature (Clark, 1997). The physical pace of movement, the tempo of life (Farnworth & Fossey, 2003) was generally leisurely, and people took their time and rarely hurried. 'Athenians' were seen to be people in a rush, stressed by the faster pace of city life.

In a similar way people tried to be in tune with their selves, aware of their needs, for example, for sleep, food, entertainment, or companionship. It was expected and considered appropriate to be responsive to these. Wilcock (1993), writing from Australia, suggested that the stresses, pressures, regulations and changing values of contemporary occupation, have dominated the natural and health promoting occupation of people in the past. Certainly, this farming community maintained a more flexible and relational to the context and self way of life than is possible in large industrialised and privatised urban centres. Additionally, Orthodox teachings do not lead to the kind of self-denial and moulding of character associated with the Puritan branches of Protestantism. A final influence may be the nature of such small communities where people are known their entire lives. Adults social identities were established in childhood - *"he was always stubborn, even as a child, just like his uncle"*. The result was an expectation that the individual would live in harmony with their self, recognising and responding to its needs.

These ideas around balance reflect ideas that have been described as historical and traditional, that is, broadly focused on maintaining health through a balance between thoughts, actions and feelings, within the physical and social environments. (Christiansen & Matuska, 2006). Occupational balance is a core concept in occupation therapy and occupational science although there have been few empirical studies exploring the concept (Stamm et al., 2009), and there has been some overlap with the concepts of lifestyle balance and role balance. Most recent discussions focus on the individual and their subjective sense of harmony achieved when the person is able to organise and participate in occupations congruent with their aspirations and values (Anaby et al., 2010; Backman, 2011). As will be further explored in the following chapters, balance in the town was not focused exclusively on the individual and their values, but also on the body-soul relationship and the quality of the relationships between the individual, their family, the community and context.

This discussion of balance completes this second narrative thread around taking care of the body and soul, adding to the previous discussion of the metaphysical world and the individuals place in it. Now, the final thread will explore ideas directly linked to occupation and specifically the need for doing something, going out and being with other people.

## **Doing Something, Going out, and Being with Other People**

Mr. Nikos talked about how he liked to be busy, out of his home and much of the enjoyment he got from his work was related to seeing and being with people. These needs will be initially explored individually before a final discussion of them as a whole.

### **Doing something.**

For most people doing something was taken for granted as ongoing occupation and particular *dhouleíá*, was demanded by the need for survival. However, for some elderly and unemployed women this need to do something was expressed in its most foundational form, that is, to do something rather than to do nothing. For women, this could entail doing housework, as illustrated by Katerina who visited her mother each day and ‘forced’ her to sweep her floor “*so that at least she does something*”, as she told me.

I frequently heard older men comment to each other “*as long as you are still upright you are alright*”, and they encouraged each other to keep walking and to go to the *kafeneío* daily. It seemed they were still ‘alright’ because being upright indicated they were still active and able to care for themselves.

Better than doing just anything was to do something that was different. For those who did paid work this was often inherent in the nature of the work where the changing context required an ongoing occupational response. For example, most businesses were small with the owner working to order, produce, sell and restock in response to the needs of their customers and new items and trends emerging on the market. Those

who farmed engaged in ongoing change and adjustment to occupation in response to the needs of the crops and livestock within the changing seasonal and daily conditions. This ongoing need to be responsive to the changing situation did not only lead to habitual patterns but also to creativity and to new inventions. An elderly farmer, Mr. Simos described to me many of the farming implements that he and his generation had created - "*when you had a problem you found a solution*", he commented. The townspeople were renowned throughout Greece for their mechanical abilities, and had produced some of the first mechanised farming equipment and their mechanical and innovative skills were still evident in various forms throughout the town.

This need to do differently was also evident amongst the women and the elderly who did not have the opportunities of work out of the home. For example, the women used each other as sources of new recipes and new embroidery designs. Also, they cooked with seasonal fruit and vegetable, and although this was unavoidable given the localised nature of many supplies, people actively looked forward to winter and eating mandarin oranges, and the summer with watermelon and grapes, enjoying the variety and change. Flowers, herbs, tea and *xórta* were collected according to the seasons. Changing occupations were talked about in great detail with neighbours and family.

New situations and new demands require problem solving, creativity, initiative (Cutchin, 2004; Cutchin et al., 2008), and a heightened level of arousal. Csikszentmihalyi's work on flow (1991) also emphasises the necessity for experiences that provide challenge. It appeared that people actively searched for opportunities for these experiences. Wilcock (1993) discusses the human need to prevent disorder and use capabilities, experienced as a need to spend energy, explore, and create, and it can be seen that this view was consistent with this need to do and to do differently.

The need to do differently was also observed in relation to routines. Routines, semi-automatic patterns of behaviour, are usually perceived in the literature to be desirable as they provide a structure that organizes daily life (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2008; Clark, Sanders, Carlson, Blanche, & Jackson, 2007), organising time in predictable, cyclical patterns (Kielhofner, 2002). However, in the observed daily life of the people of the town it was seen that active attempts were made to avoid routines. For example, Katerina rarely cooked at the same time each day, Mrs. Ketty

shopped from various butchers, and the hours that the Mayor would be in his office were unknown. Everyday conversation was always about the details, the changes in occupation and not about what remained the same. This ongoing variation was also commented on in an earlier ethnography of a Greek village (Friedl, 1962, pg 82), the American author commenting, that variation “appeared to be efforts simply to alleviate the felt boredom of routine activities. The feeling of security which many Americans derive from the regular performance of routine tasks seems unknown”.

This avoidance of routines may be explored from the transactional perspective and the understanding of occupation that is emerging in this study. It can be seen how the nature of life in a rural, farming community, with closely integrated family relationships required, or has led to occupation as process that was responsive to continually changing contextual demands. Additionally, it was considered important that the individual be responsive to their changing physical and emotional state, living in balance with their self. Finally, routines may reduce the possibility for exploration, creativity and innovation that were part of the need to do something.

### **Going out.**

Linked to the need to do was the need to go out, out of the house. Mr. Nikos and a number of other men remarked that they never had their morning coffee in their own homes, and many men seemed to use their homes as a place to eat, rest and sleep. While this was certainly linked to the intensely social nature of daily life in the town, there also seemed to be a more fundamental need to be out of the house, as emerged in the comments of two women, Martha and Letta, who had been recently employed on temporary, part-time contracts:

*Martha remarked that now her children had left home she was pleased to have found work as it gave her a reason to get up in the morning and to get out of the house and how good that was for her. This view was echoed by Letta whose whole appearance improved when she started work. She told me that her doctor had asked her what had happened and she explained to him that she had found work for the afternoons. He had told her how it would be good if she could find it for the whole day, as everyone needs to get out and about.*

But getting out was not only linked to work. Martha talking of what she liked to do, remarked: *“To go and have a coffee with a friend, I enjoy that. Sometimes I go and play Biriba (a card game). Anything really, to get away from the house”*. This view was common to many women, not only those whose children had left home, but others, like Ioanna, whose two children were still at school. She looked forward to the weekends in order to have a chance to go out: *“We are stuck indoors during the week and so you wait till the weekend to go out, we always go out either Saturday or Sunday, or sometimes both days”*.

While the need to go out may be linked to the idea of doing something different discussed previously, it may also be linked to a need to be in the world, in the flow of life. This sense was best expressed in going for a *vólta*, which may be translated as walk, ride or stroll, while not being exactly any of these. A useful comparison is the cruising in cars of American adolescents depicted in films. However, unlike these adolescents whose aim seems to see and be seen, with the people of the town it was difficult to identify a particular aim or purpose. Going for a *vólta*, often involved going alone into the countryside and seemed to be more to do with opening a space for oneself to just be in the environment. People of all ages went for a *vólta*, usually unplanned and both alone and with others.

*Litsa told me that she and her partner were just back from a vólta. She had had enough, having been cooking since the morning in their taverna, and they had just jumped on the bike and gone all across the fields, up to a neighbouring village. “I needed it, I needed to get away”. On another occasion Ariadne told me that her 17 year old son was out, gone for a vólta, he needed a break from his exam revision, had taken his bike and just gone.*

When people talked about the need to go out or described going out, I had the sense of a physical need, experienced in the muscles and emotions for movement and freedom having been kept enclosed and restrained for too long. But it also was a need for physical and emotional space that would enable a re-adjustment of balance, or a re-establishment of the person’s relationship with themselves and the world. The exact nature of the occupation that would facilitate restoration of balance was fluid, depending on what had been experienced as missing – isolation led to social contact

with friends in the square, the physical inactivity and intense concentration of exam revision leading the teenager to a long bicycle ride alone. When the need to go out was combined with the need to be with people, as will be discussed in continuation, there was a powerful drive towards social occupation.

### **Being with other people.**

A third need both discussed and observed was the need to see and be with other people. Mr. Nikos liked his work because he liked people, he liked to be sociable and he knew other people liked him. He knew that he would miss that when he retired, as happened shortly after the study. Loneliness was a significant problem for a number of older people who were living alone, their children living in other towns and with a rapidly decreasing number of neighbours. Mrs. Dimitra talked to me about her loneliness one morning when I met her sitting in the upper square:

*She talked about what a bad thing loneliness is. She said, "there is a saying that if you want to punish someone, or show them what hell is like, you should make them stay on their own. I didn't understand it before, but it is a very difficult thing". So, she told me, she had been feeling the loneliness in her home and had come down to the square hoping to find some company.*

One evening I joined the women for their weekly get-together in the KAPI. I had been told on a number of occasions that the KAPI was important because it gave the older people somewhere to go and people to talk to. Wednesday evenings had been designated as being for women only, as many of the older widows were not willing to go out if men were present.

*I was invited to join a group of five women sitting around a table. Someone at the next table said that more classes were being organized (further education) and there was an immediate buzz of interest. I asked if they would like more classes and asked what they thought was missing from the town and their lives. The woman next to me said "social relationships". She pointed to herself and three of the other women, "we are all on our own. Our children have moved away, so we have great loneliness".*



Loneliness was most fundamentally experienced by those single, older people living on their own, as the majority of people of all ages spent a large part of the day with other people. The large number of cafés, tavernas and bars as primary places of entertainment, indicated the ongoing centrality of social life in the town. Free time from *dhouleiés* was commonly used to meet with others for a coffee or a drink, and withdrawal from this sort of activity was considered unusual:

*Christos, in his mid 30's, married with a young child, told me that he hadn't been out at all for a week. When I asked more [understanding his comment to mean he had been ill and stuck indoors] he explained: "I would just get back from work and then stay in every evening. Everyone was wondering what was wrong with me". A few months later I saw him again and he told me that he and his family had moved back to the town, from the hamlet, where they had been living. I was surprised as he had told me he liked living there. He explained: "there's no-one there, the nearest people are at the petrol station [about 200 metres away] and Sophia [about 100 metres away], there's no-one to drink your coffee with in the morning"*

While the need to be with others is here discussed as a need emerging from the individual, the intensely social, embodied experiences of the infant and child in this community and within the family group (see following chapters), suggest that the need to be with other people had emerged from habitual experiences.

### **Doing something, going out and being with other people.**

Apart from going out and meeting up with friends or *paréa* (companions), people combined their needs to do something, to go out, and to be with other people by joining one of the various groups in the town, as Mr. Nikos described. The Church had a prayer circle, the Folk Law Association had a choir and a folk dance group for adults and there was a football team, all of which met at least weekly.

Day trips and short holidays were organised by the local coach company, the KAPI and some of the associations, offering an opportunity to go and do something different with one's friends and *paréa* (companions). Despite the limited number of such events

people considered carefully before signing up for them, not only because of the cost, but also in regard to whom else were going:

*Frances was asked on a number of occasions if she would go on a trip with one of the associations. Each time she refused, despite frequently saying how bored she was, because, as she remarked to me: "I just don't want to go with them. Who would I talk to? It's not that any of them are my friends, I would be just stuck there on my own".*

Finally the potential monotony and isolation of everyday life was broken on an almost monthly basis by the community holidays, celebrations and events which took place throughout the year. They required considerable preparation that included problem solving and creativity, responsibilities and cooperation. (See *Appendix I* for annual calendar).

Despite these events, it could be said that the limited organised, commercial, leisure activities and the traditional way of life in the town, reduced opportunities to satisfy needs. However, the self-employed in particular, retained a large degree of control and independence over their lives, while the interpenetration of nature and the seasons with daily life, made ongoing demands and opportunity for choice, creativity and inventiveness. These findings find resonance with a number of studies which demonstrated the health benefits of occupation that demands challenge, the use of physical and mental capacities including choice and control, and taking risks (Jackson, Carlson, Mandel, Zemke, & Clark, 1998; Law et al., 1998).

However, not all people satisfied their needs. I was told that there were many women taking anti-depressant or unspecified medication to help them sleep or for *ághos*. A number of people experienced considerable occupational deprivation due to contextual factors (Whiteford, 2011; Wilcock, 1993). The loneliness experienced by some older people, particularly widowers, was intense as they were unable to engage in social occupation. Brought up in large, extended families within vibrant neighbourhoods, they now lived in semi-deserted neighbourhoods with only another two or three elderly people living nearby. Many of these people lived in the oldest parts of the town, high up on the hill, reached by steep narrow roads and with no shops or *kafeneío*. Some were rarely able to leave their homes due to the traditional architecture which placed living

quarters on the first floor up a steep flight of steps, while a few of the elderly women were equally restricted by traditional values which prevented a woman going into public spaces on her own.

Unemployment was also an ongoing cause of deprivation, particularly for women. Employment, at the most fundamental level, offered the opportunity to physically leave the home and gain a small income. If the work was with someone else there was also the opportunity for social contact and shared experiences. An income also increased a women's power, as she then had the opportunity to make her own decision regarding purchases and not to rely on handouts from her husband. While the women working on part-time contracts offered by the local municipality, or as cleaners, waitresses or in local shops, all gained these opportunities, they also were occupationally marginalised (Stadnyk et al., 2011), frequently exploited with irregular payment and low salaries, few opportunities to develop further skills and could usually be fired at any moment. They remained isolated from those women afforded a higher status, being engaged in their own profession, such as the dentist, lawyer, and teachers. Young immigrants, some of them possibly illegal, were also vulnerable employees. Generally they worked long hours in hard conditions and had little to do in the evenings as social events were usually restricted to family members.

## **Reflections on Maintaining the Self-in-the-World**

In this chapter three threads intertwine indicating the complexity of maintaining self-in-the-world. Garrison (2001, p. 291) discusses Dewey's idea of the "moving equilibrium of integration", and it can be seen how the ongoing flow of everyday occupation involved ongoing adjustment to maintain the balance of the self-in-the-world. The term 'self' was used as this active process involved each individual as they cared for their own needs as they understood and experienced them. Despite the collective and interactional nature of much of daily life, and an understanding that the self is not central but relational and contextualized (Phelan & Kinsella, 2009) (a notion explored more fully in the following chapter) people expressed a clear sense of 'me' and what 'I' needed. The self included both body and soul, and a good life incorporated a way of

living that expressed both, while the spiritual world touched and was an inherent part of all.

Maintaining the self-in-the-world was experienced and understood as a transactional process. The world of the individual was indivisibly part of the physical experience of growing up, working on and doing with the land, also part of the dangers but also the opportunities for healthy occupation. Occupational deprivation was experienced by the physically isolated and some unemployed. The unity of self and world was perhaps most acutely experienced during experiences of *kéfi*, during *vóltes*, and even mundane occupation such as collecting *xórta*.

As a process, maintaining the self required an ongoing awareness of needs and the possibility for occupation to shift between alternative needs of the individual and emerging demands of the situation. Occupation was characterised by flexibility rather than routines overtime, and by multiple, overlapping forms balancing the various needs and demands of each on-going moment. *Dhouleiés* were combined with going out and seeing other people, and many *dhouleiés* gave opportunities for creativity and innovation. Hard physical work was balanced with rest and relaxation but also with opportunities to sing or dance with your *psixí*.

Maintaining the self-in-the-world had value in the town, it was an important reason with which things were done, part of the practical knowledge underpinning daily life in the town (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 186). As a concept it moves beyond current understandings of 'self-care' as a category of occupation described in the literature (e.g. Law et al., 1997). Traditionally occupations have been divided into three areas or purposes, that is, self-care, work and leisure. Despite an understanding, evident in the literature, of the person as a whole with cognitive, affective, physical and spiritual aspects (Townsend, 1997a), and the individual's volition, including their values and interests, specifically identified as important to occupation (Kielhofner, 2008), the category of self-care, also referred to as activities of daily living, largely focuses on care of the body and body related functions. If one of the purposes of occupation is described as self-care in this limited sense, the complexity of the person and their interrelated needs as understood in this study, is ignored.

Occupational therapy and occupational science have emerged in what are usually described as individualistic cultures, that is, North America and the UK. Western thought has also been strongly influenced since Descartes by the idea of the individual as a reasoning agent, emancipated from belief, together with the splitting of mind from body in Cartesian dualism. In such a life world the independence of the self is highly valued and there is an emphasis on self-sufficiency with a relative detachment from the structural and relational context (Hammell, 2009a; Iwama, 2006; Pouliasi & Verkuyten, 2011). The related scientific method has also led to a process of dividing and compartmentalising functions in order for them to be objectively understood.

Understanding the self and its care in the context of the town, fits poorly within the categories and hierarchies of western occupational models and even international tools such as the ICF (World Health Organization, 2001). The self cannot be wholly understood in terms of functions and structures, and occupation to maintain the self is not a mechanistic process related to the performance of specific named, observable activities. It is a flexible, creative, emergent process of the individual in their situation. The quality of occupation is important as a process that ensures the expression of self as a whole, including the physical, emotional and spiritual.

In this emerging understanding of maintaining the self, the relationship between self-care, work/productivity and leisure also changes. Usually they are presented as categories or purposes of occupation at the same level of the activity-occupation hierarchy. Here, work and leisure operated more as a servant supporting the self (Carlson, Park, Kuo, & Clark, 2012), but also as a means for its expression.

When considered from this focus, occupation as process becomes powerfully important. The overlapping, flexible, inter-related everyday doings of the people permitted them to maintain their self in all its complexity. Spiritual beliefs, ideas around health and balance, needs for doing and being with others, could be combined within the individually orchestrated occupational process.

This chapter has focused on the individual. However, it has become evident that the individual is an interdependent being with a self deeply inter-related with all elements of the context, including the social. Therefore this initial narrative focusing on the

individual is inextricably linked to the second narrative that concerns the family, which is developed in the following chapter.

## **Chapter 7: Maintaining the Family**

Maintaining the family is the second plot in this narrative understanding of occupation in Melissa. This chapter extends and builds on the process of maintaining the self-in-the-world as discussed in the preceding chapter, moving to explore the interrelated process of maintaining the family, both as a central value of everyday life and as an important element of practical doing.

### **Introducing the Family**

Family was a central part of daily life in the town, and will be explored from a number of perspectives in this chapter. Following this introduction where again Mr. Nikos will provide an illustration of the importance of family throughout his own life, the following section will discuss how family is understood both generally in Greece and specifically in this town, including the nature of interdependence and the relational self. In continuation two threads to this narrative of maintaining the family will be developed. The first explores the *noikokurió* (household) and how occupation to maintain the household including care of family members, was fundamental to maintaining the family and a major part of daily occupation. However, the importance of the family extended beyond this focus on the household to many aspects of daily life. The second thread therefore discusses the centrality of family to occupation through the idea of 'family occupation'; how family, the members, their shared places and embodied experiences, their resources and their needs, were an inextricable part of much of daily occupation. The final section of this chapter will turn to the ongoing consideration of balance as issues of power emerge within the complex relationships between family members and between self and the family.

As already indicated, this chapter opens with Mr. Nikos as he moved on from telling of his daily life and needs, and recounted a story of his life. He based it around his family, what they had achieved and what he had done to support the various members for whom he perceived he had responsibility. His chosen focus indicated that for him, as for other inhabitants in the town, family was an essential part of not only what he did, but also of whom he was.

*“My father was self employed, he made work shoes. We grew up with considerable difficulties. I was born in 1932, the oldest of four children: three boys and my sister. I, as the oldest, didn’t go to study, staying at school until the fourth grade of high school [15/16 years old]. I liked my fathers’ work, I was always in and out of the shop and from 18 years old I followed his profession. My brother Pavlos also only went to school until the 4th grade. My sister Triantafillia finished high school but didn’t study, we couldn’t afford it. She stayed at home. Last was Alexander, eixe óreksi yia grámmata (he had an appetite for learning).*

*Slowly I learnt the work and I started to create a variety of shoes: men’s, women’s, and children’s, I designed them myself and made them from beginning to end. My brother Pavlos also helped in the shop and slowly trade expanded. Both Pavlos and Alexander helped when we went to the trade-fairs (street bazaars), lasting six and seven days at a time.*

*Then, ékana megáli máxi (I did great battle), and through a member of parliament I put my brother Pavlos as a clerk in the local branch of the bank here. Back then, everybody got in with méson (means, i.e. connections used to get a position), without méson you couldn’t get in anywhere. After some years I took him to work in a branch of the bank in Athens. I enrolled him at night school and he finished the High School, and got transferred to the Logistics section with exams. He worked in many branches, made good progress, he was clever and they all liked him. He was also a trade unionist, they all took account of him and finally he was deputy manager of a major branch of the bank.*

*And I took it on and pántrepsa (married, i.e. organized the marriage of) my sister. I had a piece of land from my mother that we sold, and from here and there, whatever we*



*gathered, we bought a flat in Athens, and my sister lived there. She married Yiannis, a local, and they had two children. They went well, everything all right.*

*My brother Alexander finished high school, he was a good student and as the oldest I took on the responsibility for his studies. He followed the Judiciary, he became a magistrate and after some years he became president of the Legal Council. Like Pavlos, he was also correct and likeable. He married and had two children who both became lawyers. Now he has retired, but he bought an office in Athens, and is preparing it as a legal office for his children. He will also be active in it, to help them.*

*I got married in 1969 and took as my wife Chrisoula, and we had two children, Simos and Marianthi. Simos was a good student and he went to University to do Business Administration and he has a good job. Marianthi completed Graphic Design and, with the help of my brother-in-law, got in with examinations to the bank and has been there for about 14 years. I have managed to buy a small flat in Athens for them and they live there. I am just sorry that neither of them has married yet, and my wife would like grandchildren.*

*I could have done more, but I am proud that I supported them and they have all done well". He went to his car and brought back some photos of them all, which he showed me proudly.*

In telling the story of his life Mr. Nikos focused on what he considered to be the right way for the eldest brother, husband and father – an *oikogeneárhis* (the head of the family) - to live. The importance of his family and their ongoing presence in his everyday life and occupation was evident, but also his responsibility towards them as he worked to provide financial support and developed the social and political connections with those who could arrange opportunities, particularly for employment. The economic crisis caused him considerable anxiety, as his traditional means for supporting and protecting his family were no longer effective against such a national and global threat.

Family for Mr. Nikos, as for other people in the town, was both ideology and practice; ongoing daily occupation was almost entirely with and for family members and it was

underpinned by an understanding of the ideal family. Family and self were inextricably interrelated, family was embodied in the stories and the habits of growing up in the town, and survival, care and celebration all took place primarily with and within the family. Before moving onto to explore these elements in more detail, it is important to consider understandings of 'family' in the town, and more generally in Greece.

## **The Family as Ideology and Practice**

The family continues to be regarded as the most important thing in the lives of the majority of Greeks (Georgas, Berry, Shaw, Christakopoulou, & Mylonas, 1996; 1991; Papadopoulou, 1998; Pouliasi & Verkuyten, 2011). Underpinning emotional and practical ties is an ideal of what family is or should be, which, as for Mr. Nikos, included the importance of marriage and of children (Likeridou, Hykas, Paunonen, & Leyti, 2001). In these ideals he demonstrated the ideology embedded in the slogan '*Patrída, Thriskeía, Oikogéneia*' (Homeland, Religion, Family), used by conservative organisations since the late 19th Century, including the Dictatorship of the 1970s. Arising from Orthodoxy it aimed to draw together the political and the religious within the ideal family, and was used at various times to support both conservative and anti-feminist arguments (Gazi, 2011). The family in this rhetoric resembled classical definitions of the family, and in the town it was taken for granted that the two sex couple, married in church, would produce at least one child, who, when an adult, would also want to marry and have children.

Orthodox teachings and practices are inherent in this image of the ideal family. Until 1983 only an Orthodox wedding was legally recognized and only a child born in marriage was legitimate. At the time of the study, a 'real' wedding remained a church wedding, as Yiannis remarked: "*without a marriage in church there is no sacrament*". The bond of marriage was complete when the father and mother became "one flesh" in the body of their child (Paxson, 2004), who was then baptised, and while divorce was permitted it was not encouraged. There were few alternative understandings of 'family' in the town. I did not meet any families with step-children/parents. A number of gay couples had holiday homes on the outskirts of the town, however they were not

members of town families and rarely involved themselves in the common daily occupation, were tolerated but not included. While at the core of the family were the couple and their children, family also included, as was seen in Mr. Nikos story, grandparents and siblings, cousins, nieces and nephews, from both sides of the family.

A transactional perspective enables an exploration of the maintenance of what may be perceived as a rather narrow and conservative ideology of the family, when considered in transaction with the economic structure of Greek society historically that has created strong interdependence within the family unit. Interdependence has been described as having both material and emotional dimensions and the town was an example of an agricultural area where the economic conditions had demanded intergenerational support for the family's livelihood (Georgas et al., 2001; Kagitcibasi, 1996), as Mr. Nikos' story demonstrated. Inheritance of the family home was linked to care of ageing parents, and at the time of the study the limited state welfare for the elderly continued to demand the active practical and financial involvement of children in the care of their elderly parents. The low income of many of the townspeople and the unavailability of home mortgages until quite recently, together with the ongoing needs of elderly relatives, combined to reinforce the ongoing practical interdependence of family members.

At the same time close emotional bonds were usual, expected and encouraged between family members. In part, this sense of being part of the family emerged as an embodied identity, linked to the traditional family's self-identification as *Mellisíotes*, while the habits guiding much of daily occupation were embedded in family activities, understandings and meanings. Yiannis, who had moved back to the town from Athens, when his children were small, described his sense of belonging: *"People who live in the city are like cabbages; they have no roots and get blown about in the wind. When you live in the village you have roots"*. Yiannis talked about how he wanted his children to go to the same school as he did; he had sat in the same classroom as his mother had, and his son had the same teacher as he had. His son had improved his math by playing card games and backgammon with his grandfather. His family continued to physically share celebrations and to talk daily even if living in different towns. Family here was embedded in the shared doing with family members, in particular places and over time; memory was located in the embodied experience of particular buildings and

the qualities of particular social relationships, while ongoing experiences reinforced and built on these.

However, traditional family patterns with emotional and material interdependence and authoritarian parenting (Kagitcibasi, 1996) were changing. Generally over the past 30 years in Greece, change has been noted from a collectivist to a more individualist culture (Georgas, 1989), from an extended to a nuclear family, with an increasing number of women entering the labour market and greater equality of roles within the home (Papadopoulos, 1998), and autonomous but related young adults living in urban areas (Mylonas et al., 2006). These changes have not been a linear process between dichotomies and in the town all these elements were still evident, co-existing in a variety of relationships depending on the demands of the changing context and on the particular characteristics of each family (Pouliasi & Verkuyten, 2011). In particular both autonomy and ongoing relatedness co-existed, supporting the idea of the autonomous-relational self (Kagitcibasi, 1996), a useful concept when considering the relationship of self and family explored in this chapter.

Maintaining the family comprised a complex transaction of the ideological family, the material and emotional interdependence of the family members, together with the embodied experience of growing up as a member of a particular family. Occupation, as a transactional process, supported, coordinated and balanced these elements, working towards ensuring the maintenance of the family, balanced with the demands of the self and of the wider social environment (explored in the following chapter). In the following section the thread of the narrative regarding maintaining the *noikokurió* (the household) will be developed.

## **Occupation: Supporting the Noikokurió (the Household)**

The ideological family found its practical expression in the *noikokurió* (the household). Identified as central to traditional rural Greek economic organization, the ideal *noikokurió* was a “corporate, self-sufficient, family-based enterprise” (Salamone & Stanton, 1986, p. 98). Its normative and ideal conceptualisation continued to carry not

only the practical requirements of the home and family, but also ideals of orderliness, cleanliness and morality. The couple worked together to achieve this ideal (hence some of the difficulties associated with divorce and widowhood): the *noikokurá* was not only a housewife, but was a good housewife, as her husband, the *noikokúris*, was a man who had successfully established and supported his household.

Occupation emerged to satisfy the practical needs of the home and family members, with the quality and characteristics required by this notion of the ideal family. Mr. Nikos endeavoured to be a good *noikokúris* - since his father's death he was the *oikogeneárhis* (head of the household), he worked hard in his shop to support his family financially and materially, and had engaged in a number of community organisations in order to ensure his family was part of the social fabric (see Chapter 8). He considered himself responsible for the well-being of his children and brought them up to be hard working, honest and respectful (Mylonas et al., 2006).

Occupation to support the household mainly took the form of *dhouleiés* – things that had to be done. Introduced in the preceding chapter, *dhouleiés* intertwined survival and care of the self with that of the family. Engaging in paying work, the preparation of quality food, taking care of the home and paying bills, were all *dhouleiés* not only to take care of the self, but were also part of maintaining the family. They were essential and functional, mundane and ongoing. Smith (2003) identified a similar range of activities when she explored what people actually do when they do paid and household work, and importantly also identified the central importance of the connections between people in these sorts of doings.

Primarily emerging from the context, *dhouleiés* were perceived as demands and obligations, while some carried external time frames and structures (e.g. paying a bill on time and when the banks were open) that reinforced this sense of external control. They were also primarily organised along traditional gender lines. The following vignette illustrates the day to day life of Frances as she fulfils what she considered to be her responsibilities as a mother, wife and daughter-in-law, inextricably linking occupation, primarily *dhouleiés*, for her self and her family.

*Frances was a dark haired, well-built, 40 year old woman, who had lived in Melissa since her marriage 18 years previously. Of Greek parents she was born in the Greek diaspora overseas. She lived on the edge of the lower square in a first floor flat of traditional design with commercial buildings underneath, all owned by her husband's family. When Frances and her husband married and moved into the flat, her sister-in-law moved out, but her mother-in-law who was a widower stayed with them. They had two children, a boy of 15 and a girl of 11. She talked of her daily activities without much enthusiasm or interest, they were just the things she had to do and she took it for granted that I knew about them, being a mother and wife too. She frequently used the phrase "I can't be bothered..." to describe how she avoided conflict or change.*

*She woke at seven each morning, just before the alarm went off, giving herself twenty minutes to get up before she had to wake her two children for school. She prepared chocolate milk for them to drink before leaving and a sandwich or something to take with them. Her mother-in-law made a coffee that she drank in her own room and Frances had her own time with her coffee and the morning programmes on the television, before either starting her dhouleiés or getting ready for work, which started at ten. Her husband, who had a chronic illness, did not get up till ten or so. She shared the cooking with her mother-in-law – usually "I let her make what she wants". They seemed to have a relationship of practical cooperation rather than of positive emotional bonds.*

*Frances did not really like housework and did as little as possible: "It's a good thing" that they had a dust-buster which got up the crumbs after each meal, and she commented how the kitchen floor was covered with mosaic-type marble which didn't show the dirt and crumbs. Her mother-in-law usually dusted and mopped, while she washed and ironed. She enjoyed ironing as her mind could wander or she listened to music. She didn't hang out the bedding over the balcony rails, as I saw a number of women do each day, and we shared a foreigner's uncertainty about the point of it. Her mother-in-law liked washing the windows and the shutters, so she let her do that.*

*Like me, she had thought that the women in the town liked cleaning and kept their homes spotless accordingly. However, as she had got to know some women better, she realised that many of them really disliked housework too. We chatted about all the*

*work entailed in keeping the house in good enough condition for people to come, perhaps for a yiortí (name day celebration) “and they only come so they can check on how clean your cupboards are and all the corners...”*

*Then there were the seasonal tasks. One day she said she was in the middle of sorting out the summer clothes, moving things from the high storage cupboards to the lower ones. She had already taken up all the carpets and washed them and would store them until late autumn when she would lay them again. Daily tasks throughout the summer were washing the balconies and watering the plants. In the winter Frances commented how it was a good thing they did not have a fire place and so she did not have to carry wood up to the first floor.*

*She always dressed carefully and wore make up when she left the house. She tried to do most of her external dhouleiés in the morning so she did not have to get dressed again in the apóyevma (afternoon). She went daily to the bakery for fresh bread for lunch and to the weekly street market where she got most of their fruit and vegetables. She paid the bills and the monthly payments on items they had bought, for example a laptop computer. She fitted these tasks around the days she was working. She went to the supermarket every few days, either after work (she worked from ten to two) or on her days off. She quite enjoyed that, though wished she had more money so she could get the food she liked too and not just things for the children. She reminisced with me about Weetabix – how she would like to have it again if there was any spare money.*

*She worked to gain money and to have a reason to get out of the house. Her small salary usually paid for slightly more ‘luxury’ goods for her children – a pair of football boots, a mobile phone, or items needed for family events such as clothes and a gift for a wedding.*

*The family usually ate lunch all together in the kitchen at about two thirty, once the children were back from school. They kept a fairly traditional diet – on Wednesday and Friday as fasting days they usually ate pulses, and had fish at least one other day. She or her mother-in-law prepared the table and she cleared up afterwards. After lunch her husband and mother-in-law usually lay down for a rest, while she watched some television with her daughter. Then she sat with her daughter while she did her*

*homework and tried to avoid having other obligations at this time, particularly if her daughter had a test the following day. Sometimes the homework bored her, but realising that it was only for a few more years, usually enjoyed it. Her son did his homework in his bedroom and some days had a tutor come for extra lessons which they did in the salóni (formal lounge). Like most parents in the town she waited eagerly for the summer holidays when both she and her children could relax.*

*Frances chatted to friends on the phone in the morning and evening. She complained that her mother-in-law “often comes when I am talking on the phone and listens and comments. And so I try to go to the other end of the house”. Her sister-in-law usually popped round most days, and sat with her mother in her bedroom. She also rang her mother four times a day - morning, lunchtime, afternoon and sometimes as late as eleven at night. Frances mentioned, with irritation, that her sister-in-law had a key for the flat and how she would just open the door and walk in.*

*At about nine, Frances and her children had a snack, often a toasted sandwich, in front of the television, while her husband and mother-in-law who both had health problems sat in the kitchen together and had xórta (greens) or fruit and a yoghurt. They went to bed after eleven.*

Frances' daily occupation unfolded as an ongoing process of coordination with the other family members, for example, the temporal coordination of meal times and of tasks with her mother-in-law. This was coordination rather than the construction of routines (Segal, 2004), as occupation shifted to accommodate the changing external demands (for example, her son would eat lunch earlier if he had football practice), and in accordance with the individual needs of family members, particularly the children, as needs of the self were given priority, as discussed in the preceding chapter. Frances was comfortable to provide care, for example, meals, when her children needed it and did not demand a strict adherence to a timetable.

Frances' day incorporated many of the core *dhouleiés* required to maintain the family that were expected of a woman and mother, and was similar to that of other women with whom I talked. Those who also worked outside the home fitted the household tasks around their work, for example, cooking the day's meal before leaving for work.



Those with older parents not living in the same home, shopped, collected medicines and visited them. The gender division of *dhouleiés* was central to daily life and will be discussed in more detail.

### **Occupation as a matter of gender.**

As illustrated by the accounts of both Mr. Nikos and Frances, *dhouleiés* to maintain the household and the care of the family members were organised along clearly defined gender lines. These were acknowledged openly by both men and women: Makis indicated a woman in her late 30's sitting behind us and told me that she was his cousin's wife, and *"as good a noikokurá (housewife) as any, from whichever way you look at it: keeping the house clean, cooking, and the way she is raising their children - music, English lessons..."*, and [he added with emphasis], *"she helps her husband in his work in the evenings."*

While in Western literature the gendered nature of household tasks has been attributed to women traditionally not working out of the home (Primeau, 2000), this was not the case in the town. The traditional pattern of working for the farming families had been that both men and women worked together in their fields, and on returning home at nightfall, the women had continued to cook, make bread and wash the clothes, while the husband, having cared for the mules, was free to go to the *kafeneío* and engage with the wider social world. A gender division of *dhouleiés* seemed to have been part of the characteristics of daily life for generations, and has been reported in studies of other Greek villages (Friedl, 1962).

The entrenched division of occupation by gender continued despite the Women's Associations established throughout Greece in the 1980s, to support women's rights, coinciding with the new family laws, brought in by the first Socialist Government (elected 1981). Sophia, the President of the Women's Association told me that the original aim of the women's movement, to make women aware of their rights and of their status as equal citizens, had now been achieved. She said that it was now up to each woman to decide how they wished to use those rights and to live their lives, and so the Women's Association focused more on involving women in the fabric of the community. Despite the rhetoric and institutional establishment of equal rights for

women, women continued to be seen as, and perceived themselves to be, responsible for all tasks within the home: cooking, cleaning, washing and care of children and elderly relatives.

However gender divisions were not simply about who did what on a daily basis, they were also about power and decision making. While the Greek man has been traditionally portrayed as a domineering male and the woman as subservient and powerless this view has been challenged for some years with an understanding that much more complex negotiations go on, especially within the privacy of the home (Dubisch, 1986). However, the notion that men had ultimate authority entered day to day discourse on numerous occasions. It was a central element of *kalabouri* (banter) at the weekly street market and while out with your *paréa* (companions), while more serious references were also made:

*Dimitris commented on the wife of one of the taverna owners who was wearing a mini skirt, brightly coloured leggings and was heavily made-up, wondering how her husband allowed her to go out of the house looking like that.*

*Mrs. Dimitra told me about her evening out with her friends and how it had been a lovely evening and they had stayed out until after midnight. She commented “but we are all widows so we can pretty much do as we like, if we had husbands at home we wouldn’t have been able to stay out like that”.*

While undoubtedly the relative position of men and women had changed, with women no longer confined to the house and neighbourhood as described thirty years ago (Pavrides & Hesser, 1986), the economic position of women continued to be a major factor in determining the extent of their power within the family and the social sphere.

*Martha was trying to sort out the paper work required to open a small shop. Her husband was eligible to have one and while he was uninterested, she was determined to open it, being desperate to have a job for some income, independence and to have something to do out of the house. He was neither helping nor opposed to it, although generally he disliked it when she worked out of the house and at one time had forbidden her to work. I asked her if it was common amongst the women she knew for*

*the men to actively stop their wives working. She thought a bit and said “yes, the majority, yes. The men are afraid that if the women get any money they [the men] won't be able to do what they want any more. Of course it's different if the woman has a position, you know, the manager of a bank or of a service. Then the man will be proud of his wife and will like her income. That's true for couples of our age and over. The younger generation are different I think, they share things more”. But then she reflected how although her son was happy to help his fiancée in their shared home, the girl refused to let him do anything, despite Martha's warnings that she would regret it later.*

The unemployed women I talked to were all actively hoping for work, in order to have even a small income and so to be able to stop relying on their husbands for everything they wanted or needed, and in order to get out of the house. There was no support for this group from the state, for example, with small loans to start up a business, and the complex bureaucracy around starting a business was an additional barrier. For those women without higher education there were few opportunities for paid employment and it was this group that seemed most vulnerable to occupational injustice, particularly marginalisation (Stadnyk et al., 2011) regarding employment. They also were vulnerable to bullying, and in a few cases it was hinted to physical violence, by their husbands.

I was interested that many men were not indifferent or unaware of the problem. *Mr. Nikos told me that when his wife helped him in the shop or at the bazaars he gave her a salary, but commented: “I had told a friend and he couldn't understand why I would want to do that”. He agreed that the situation of some of the women in the town was “very hard”; how some could hardly go out of their homes, had no money of their own, were meant to keep everything in order, while the husband could “go out, drink and do whatever he wanted”. He was unable to comment further or say why he thought the situation was like that.*

While lack of status due to unemployment was a contributing element in maintaining gender divisions and limited power for women, a number told me that their responsibility for all household tasks was strongly supported by their mother-in-law and was also 'self-inflicted':

*Frances said that many women did not want their men (husbands and sons) in the kitchen and did not consider it their place to do housework. She recalled her own husband who when they were first married would ask her if she would like him to wash up and how she could hear in the background her mother-in-law fussing “now my son is going to start washing up!!” and how in the end she didn’t let him because it was easier to do herself. So in a way she thought it was her own fault that he did nothing.*

Mother and son may make a strong alliance within the family. Katerina explained: “as a woman you have little power in your own marriage, but through your son, with whom you will always be living, you may be able to exert some influence, so you try to keep him on your side.” The position of the *nífi* (bride/daughter-in-law) may be particularly difficult in this situation.

The wider social circle also reinforced the woman’s responsibility for the home to be kept to a high standard of cleanliness and order. The expectation that the house would be spotlessly clean and with a large number of well cooked dishes at each family *yiortí* (celebration) was evident both in the number of houses I visited where this was the case, but also by those woman who told me that they avoided holding the *yiortí* in their homes in order to avoid the work involved and the public scrutiny. Evyeneia, about to be married, thought the pressure to be a good house wife was at least partially from other women: “yes, they will talk about how you haven’t washed your balcony, if you let them. But you just have to not let them start that”.

Therefore, it appears that there were multiple intertwining factors which had led to this particular construction of occupational possibilities (Laliberte Rudman, 2010) according to gender. Women managed these demands in various ways. Some seemed to enjoy the challenge of managing their multiple obligations, particularly the women I met with successful careers, who did not avoid the gender divisions but seemed to balance household demands with the social status, satisfaction and independence that their professional work provided. They usually maintained their household to a high standard (sometimes with paid help for cleaning), perhaps to ensure no criticism that they could not manage both work and home, but in doing so contributed to the ongoing re-establishment of traditional roles. Other women, particularly the un-employed, seemed to experience the endless household tasks and care of indifferent family members as

stressful and unrewarding. They seemed unable to find strategies to use against their immediate family members' resistance to change, who all benefited practically from their work, while the opinion of the wider social group reinforced their duty to their *dhouleiés*. For these women in particular, habitual gendered patterns of occupation, with few opportunities to develop skills further, effectively prevented them from developing their potential to participate in a full range of occupation (Wicks & Whiteford, 2005). However, the occupational possibilities of men were also influenced by gender, and as for women, this was not always satisfactory.

Men perceived that their activities lay outside the home and importantly that they were not wanted in the home. My husband and I were chatting to Michaelis and mentioned that my husband would be taking early retirement in a couple of years. Michealis turned to me and said: *"but you don't want him at home under your feet"*. It was a statement. Before I could reply, he reassured me that he would take care of my husband by developing a *perivóli* (market garden) with him. Several men told me that they had their morning coffee in the square, commenting, as Mr. Nikos did: *"I have never had my coffee at home, in all the 58 years I have worked in this shop. Why would I? To fight with my wife?"*

Within the house many men did nothing but eat, rest, sleep and wash. However, if a celebration or event was held outside it was always the men who cooked the barbequed meat, women preparing additional and side dishes. Traditionally, as the *nikokúris* they were responsible, through their work, for providing the money or goods for the upkeep of the household and the support of family members. A good *noikokúris* worked extremely hard, not with "a compulsive need to work to achieve self-respect" (Friedl, 1962, p. 50) but to provide the best he could for his household. While men generally had more freedom and free time than many women, not all men were involved in occupation that fulfilled their potential. Work opportunities were limited, and the majority were in farming, manual or shop based work. In addition, the role of the *noikokúris* was narrowly defined, demanding hard-work and the demonstration of specific values and morality, while some unmarried men remained rather isolated from the family-orientated majority.

Although the couple carried out *dhouleiés* along traditional gender lines, they were both working to the common purpose of maintaining the *noikokurió* (household). A fundamental part of the household was the family members and as we saw with both Mr. Nikos and Frances, a major part of household *dhouleiés* regarded care of family members and particularly of the children. These *dhouleiés* had an intensely emotional quality compared to the more mundane tasks, with strong bonds of affection. Care of the children will be discussed first, followed by care of the ageing parent.

### **The children are the future, you have to look after them.**

*I asked Martha what are the most important things in life, and she replied without any hesitation, “the children”.*

I observed the quality of the relationship with children in the small details of daily occupation. What was done, for example, cooking family meals and taking a small child to school, were familiar to me. However, it was in the details of the how these were done or in the meaning attached that I found myself frequently surprised, and aware that I was entering a situation with a very different world view from my own, for example:

*One day I was buying bread and the baker asked me about the UK and then about my children. I told him that they were both studying in the UK, saying it with an expectation that with the high value placed on education in the town I would receive some recognition of their achievement. Instead he turned to me with the facial expression of someone offering their condolences at bereavement and said heavily “ax, ti na yínei, éinai polí makriá ex (what’s to be done, they’re so far way eh)”.*

During the study I frequently experienced the importance and the priority given to children, and the need that the generations maintain a practical and emotional relationship through a network of occupation throughout their lives. Seen against this, the distance away from me that my children lived, could be seen as bereavement; a loss of an important part of my relational self (Kagitcibasi, 1996; Pouliasi & Verkuyten, 2012).

Occupation involving children had two particular characteristics in the town, which can be linked to the autonomy and the relatedness that characterised family relationships (Kagitcibasi, 1996). There was an overwhelming sense that each child was absolutely cherished, cared for without question and that this relatedness would continue throughout the parents' lifetime. At the same time a high priority was given to education, children were supported and encouraged to enter higher education, leading to successful employment and, of fundamental importance, the financial ability to have their own family. Caring and the education of the young child will be considered first, while the ongoing relationships between young adults and their parents will be discussed in continuation.

### ***Caring.***

While Frances was indifferent to household tasks she was totally involved in the care of her children. High levels of nurturance and care are characteristic of Greek parenting styles (Rose, Dalakas, & Kropp, 2003) and these were expressed and acted upon openly and as a matter of course. One day I was talking to the smartly dressed female president of one of the town's Associations about her work in the Association and she mentioned her son, aged about 13. I asked about bringing up a child in the town, and she said proudly: *"I didn't leave the house for the first two years of his life; that is how completely afosioméni (wrapped up/devoted) to him I was"*.

An early ethnography of modern Greece, described how until about 4 years old children were totally absorbed in a closed world of doting family members (Campbell, 1964), and similar patterns of parenting were still evident in the town. Gradually, particularly through school, children were introduced to the wider society, and encouraged to behave in a way that would not bring shame to the family, an important value in traditional Greek society (Campbell, 1964; Friedl, 1962). During adolescence parents engaged in occupation that would ensure their safety. Dangers were seen to include relationships and sex, particularly for girls, perhaps reflecting traditional understandings that boys were not able to control their sexual needs, whereas girls could, and also should avoid tempting young men (Paxson, 2004). Supervision was therefore considered both essential and a duty of parents, while there was always the ongoing surveillance by the older men sitting in the various *kafeneío*. Drugs and drink-

driving were perceived threats to the safety of older adolescents, and parents would regularly collect their children from parties and night clubs. Few parents slept until their children got home.

### ***Education.***

Success in education offered the opportunity for a well paid job that would enable the child to have their own home and family. The child's educational success was experienced as an achievement for both the self and the family (Kagitcibasi, 1996). Education leading to successful work was and remained the major means by which a family could substantially alter its position in society (Paxson, 2004) and the new connections of the successful family member extended the social network for all the family.

At the same time the primary conditions of life as a farming community were based in risk, with vulnerability to failing crops and limited state support, making secure, education-based work especially desirable. Also, while taking over the farming was possible for one son, education and a career had for many years been seen as ideal for the others, particularly when the alternative was emigration (Friedl, 1962). Education and career advancement was therefore supported at both a societal level, but also responded to the needs of the family and individual for survival.

While earlier studies of Greek families noted that for women the concept of individual personal accomplishment was alien (Salamone & Stanton, 1986), this was not the case in the town where both girls and boys were encouraged to study, and where many of the women had successful careers, for example, as pharmacist, lawyer, dentist, teachers and accountants.

For parents of school-age children, as Frances discussed, much of their daily occupation interlinked with the education-related occupation of their children. From the first years school was significant, as the new family member entered society and began to demonstrate their abilities outside the family. The *protáki* (little-first-grader) was equipped with their first 'proper' school bag and their progress was supervised and worried over by their parents and the immediate family. Parents' involvement with



homework continued more or less steadily throughout the school years. As illustrated by Frances' family life, with younger children this usually took the form of practical involvement including checking written work, listening to memorised passages, explaining lessons that had not been understood, while with older children parents worked to select the best tutors and pay for the additional classes. Having extra tuition in some or all subjects is a wide spread practice in Greece, pushing the standards for the school leaving examinations ever higher, and obliging parents even with low incomes to conform.

*As Frances' son approached the final years of high school, she worried about how to pay for the tutors that he needed. She argued with her mother-in-law about who was the best teacher to employ for his math. She was not absolutely sure that the lessons helped, but she worried that if she did not provide the extra lessons he would accuse her of not helping him succeed.*

While finishing school and achieving entry to higher education was one of the major targets of parents for their children, this did not conclude their involvement in their children's lives. Frances discussed her plans for when her son would finish school the following year. *She told me that he will be her priority – "if he needs me wherever he goes to study, I will go, and my sister-in-law can look after her mother for a few days. They are the future, the next generation, you have to look after them, her time has passed".*

### ***Parenting the young adult - finding their way.***

Finishing school, usually at 18, and with it the end of a period of intense practical and emotional care by parents in order to help their child achieve good examination results, usually led into a period when the child was seen increasingly as someone who "*must find their own path in life*", a first step towards the adult who would establish his or her own family. However, interdependence between parents and children was an ongoing feature of family life.

*Yiannis and Toulia were a middle aged couple, both professionals with university education. They had two children who had been away studying at university for more*

*than three years. One Saturday evening Toula arrived for a meal hot and tired. She told us that all afternoon since finishing work she had been cooking for her daughter. "Our neighbour is going to visit his grandson in the morning, he is in the same town as Anna [their daughter], and so I wanted to give him something to take with him to give her. So I made a pastichio, a pitta, and some keftédes (lasagne, pie and meat balls) and just took it to him now as they will be leaving first thing in the morning". During the meal she rang her daughter to let her know the arrangements for the next day. Finishing the call she turned to her husband and said: "óla kalá" (everything's fine), she's home and has finished the assignment and says her friend is going round for a while, so she won't be going out. That's good", and turning to us explained: "she gets too tired sometimes, trying to study and have a good time, and I am always worried when she goes out late at night". I asked Toula how often she talked to her children and she said "Oh, I don't speak very often, just once in the morning to wish them good morning and check they are up and going to classes, and once in the evening to see they had a good day, have eaten and are home safely".*

Yiannis and Toula's relationship with their children was close and intertwined, mainly expressed through practical occupation, for example, providing food, and help when they moved home, including making curtains and fixing a boiler. While major changes regarding occupation were discussed, for example career changes and holiday destinations, both children and parents decided independently. This was characteristic of most of the families I met with children who were studying away from home. Regular contact, usually daily, was maintained with children living independently. A number of parents had learned to use computers and had installed the internet in order to keep in touch with their children. However, the close relationships were mainly expressed through occupation, and led many mothers to spend the weekend children visited, washing and ironing their clothes and preparing meals. Often they prepared additional food for the child/ren to take back with them to eat during the week. Some enjoyed this, some did it without complaining and some found it tiring and frustrating.

Mr. Nikos, while not engaging in these sorts of daily care activities, also had a strong sense of obligation and a proper order of things towards his children. As the financial crisis worsened, he commented: *'it's not good; soon a father won't even be able to give his son ten euros for a coffee'*. When the roof of his home needed repairs he eventually

asked for financial assistance from his son, justifying this by saying: *'well, it will be his one day, so I suppose it's all right for him to help a bit'*.

The emotional relatedness of parents and children meant that parents' well-being on a day to day basis was largely dependent on their children and their activities, and expression of this emotional self (the soul) was expected and encouraged. Martha was tearful on the day following her daughter's departure for a trip abroad and sleepless while her 28 year old son was travelling by ferry and arriving early morning in Piraeus. *"I didn't sleep, I had éнноia (concern), and first thing this morning I called him to check everything was fine"*.

Not all families achieved a balance of autonomy and relatedness, and some maintained more traditional patterns where loyalty and obedience was expected of the children, with the father's authority remaining unquestioned (Mylonas et al., 2006). This could lead to conflict, as when two daughters asked their father to stop visiting them in Athens, which he had been doing two or three times a week, interfering considerably in their day to day lives. Numerous stories were also told of fathers who had cut out of their will a disobedient child, leaving the money to the monastery instead.

For older parents living in the town while their children lived in Athens, there were few opportunities to enact their relatedness through occupation. Mrs. Dimitra described how she found it difficult to know what to do when she visited her son in Athens: *"my son has the children all organised with a woman to look after them so there's not much for me to do there"*. However, back in the town, whenever she made bread she would usually make three loaves, freezing the two, so that if her son came she could give him one. Through the home production of bread, the most basic of all foods that combined the symbolism of nurturance and motherhood with the practicalities of survival, she sustained her need for interdependence in a form that could be accepted by her sons.

### **The ageing parent – changing places.**

As parents became older occupation related to their care emerged: taking them to hospital appointments, buying medication, doing heavy household jobs etc. These changes in occupation were a gradual process, and most parents found it difficult to

accept the care they were beginning to require. The relatedness of family members meant that children did not question their involvement in the care of their parents despite their increased autonomy, (Mylonas et al., 2006) and would advise, scold and guide their parents as they felt necessary. However, for some women this could also lead to extended periods of intense care-giving due to the limited state services together with the wide-spread belief that family members should be looked after by the family at home. An example was Rica, in her mid 60's herself, who had taken on the responsibility of her mother's care:

*Her mother had been living with her since the autumn [5 months previously]. She was 97 but until then had coped on her own and Rica would just pop in twice a day, sometimes three times if she was taking her food. However, her mother was becoming increasingly dependent and a few weeks later when we met again Rica told me her mother had been bedbound for almost two weeks, and she (Rica) was hardly able to get out of the house. "The worse things is" she said, "that here", pointing to her forehead, "she's fine, she understands everything, and she gets so upset when I have to clean her and help her, saying 'You shouldn't have to be doing that'".*

Rica took care of her mother on a 24 hour basis, with occasional breaks when her daughter, also living in the town, could take over for an hour or two, until she died a few weeks later.

Care took many forms depending on needs, but on the whole was practical, a doing kind of care, in which the need of family members were little differentiated from needs of the self. Care was not dependent on a separate individual feeling of affection or duty to a parent, but in the transactional relationship care of self, child and parent intertwined.

Up to this point the discussion has particularly focused on maintaining the household. Here, *dhouleiés*, linked with those for individual survival discussed in the preceding chapter, focused on the family and essential occupation for survival and care of vulnerable family members. However family was central to much of daily occupation beyond that of the household. This second thread will discuss the idea of 'family

occupation'; how family, the members, their shared places and embodied experiences, their resources and their needs, were an inextricable part of much of daily occupation.

## **Family Occupation**

Family occupation was occupation that was not only *for* others immediate needs, but because of, with, and of, other family members. This was occupation that included family in planning, discussion and doing, referring to the way that much occupation was constructed through the physical and emotional presence of other family members past and present. Segal (1999, p. 53) defined family occupation as occurring when the “whole family is engaged in occupation together”, however, my use of the term expands to a much broader process of occupation over time where family is a central and significant part even if not always directly involved in the moment by moment doing of occupation. This use reflects ideas of distributed occupation and the collective production of occupation discussed by Fogelberg and Frauworth (2010) in their discussion of group and community occupations.

Up to this point I have referred almost exclusively to the nuclear family of children, parents and grandparent, but when considering family occupation the extended family was also included, and additionally the *koumbáros/a* (best man/woman) and *nonós/a* (god parent) and their families. The wedding and baptism church services brought these people into a special relationship with the family as they entered a lifelong relationship with the couple or child, with responsibility for their well being, practical support and spiritual guidance. Therefore in this section family refers to a large and extended group of people. Michaelis roughly estimated his own family to include up to almost 100 people.

Family occupation could involve an elaborate orchestration of occupation and people across time, as in the following example from Katerina's family:

*Katerina's husband helped his brother with his flock of sheep and goats. He went twice daily for the milking, before and after his usual day job with the local energy company.*

*His brother wanted to keep on the family farm and Katerina's husband felt an obligation to help him. The brother's wife made cheese from the milk which she shared with Katerina's family, and when an animal was slaughtered the meat was also shared. At Easter the two brothers, helped by one son from each family who enjoyed the work, slaughtered the lambs. The year of the study they slaughtered over 40 lambs and it took them three solid days of work to slaughter, skin and hang the animals. Of course, the whole family cooked the Easter Sunday lambs together over a common pit. Katerina's part time job was offered to her by her uncle, as she was a family member and therefore could be trusted. Like many other women she rarely went out in the evenings and usually only with a family member. One summer evening I bumped into her as she was going to see a play with her female cousin. In the summer she and her husband managed to have a short holiday at the sea when a cousin invited them for three days to their house at the beach.*

Family occupation took place within a familiar and trustworthy structure. Someone remarked: *"People come back to the village because here they are known – they are a bit insecure"*, expressing perhaps the sense of security that emerged from being a part of habitual family occupation.

Family occupation extended throughout much of daily life. As for Katerina, employment opportunities frequently arose through family connections, while children commonly entered and later took over the family business as Mr. Nikos had. More informally, family members supported the family business by providing free or low paid work, when and as required, for example, at busy times of the year family members helped serve at the shops and tavernas or with harvesting. Working with family members was not only convenient and financially viable, but was also a matter of trust; a family member was someone who could be trusted. Some people complained that they did not have family to help and so were having to rely on *ksénoí* (foreigners), while others emphasized that they only gave work to family: *Katia, a busy woman, running a kafeneío and looking after her aged parents at home, admitted with some shame that she had a woman to help her at home, but quickly added, "it's my cousin, she's to be trusted"*.

Family occupation also included sharing knowledge, skills and tools. For example, when Martha was preparing to open her small shop, her cousin, who was living in another part of Greece, visited in order to give her advice, as he had a similar business; Frances was told by her brother-in-law how to claim a social benefit on behalf of her husband; Alexandra gave her mother-in-law a lift to visit her daughter in the next town; and Michaelis travelled to Belgium to pick up a truck for his cousin as he had done it before.

Family however, was also experienced and expressed through the occupation of shared celebrations and events. It was usual to celebrate one's *yiortí* (Saint's day) rather than birthday, and with grandchildren named after grandparents often a number of family members celebrated on the same day. The joint celebrations together with the symbol of shared names reconfirmed the family identity and membership of the family for each individual. Family occupation also included engagements, weddings, baptisms and funerals. For members of larger families there was some form of family-related social obligation almost every week. Family members living in other cities, returned to the town for such events, and also for major holidays (particularly Easter), the bazaar, and for elections, using these as opportunities to re-establish family bonds. These events were neither *dhouleiés* nor necessarily opportunities for *kéfi* and fun, though depending on the occasion they might be experienced as either. However, as rituals they were seen to be important in re-establishing family bonds and identity (Segal, 2004). *Violetta, a busy working woman, was planning her husband's yiortí with her adult daughter, who commented: "you just have to keep doing it, even if it is a lot of work, but if you stop doing it, then, what is there...?"*

Family occupation also took place beyond the boundaries of the family, extending into the public sphere. Occupation within the family was familiar, embodied in the trusted social and physical environment and there was a sense of ontological safety. Outside this were the 'others' – *ksénoi* (strangers) and the unknown world. Whenever possible, family members were used when dealing with the outside world. Family members who worked successfully in the wider public sphere meant access to services that could be trusted (including medical, legal, administrative and financial). As these members built up their network of connections and contacts more people became known and further trusted connections were added.

Apart from this access to trusted public services many families were also active in local politics, as described by Mr. Nikos at the opening to this chapter. Party membership brought the possibility that a local politician might offer opportunities for employment in the civil service in exchange for the vote of all the family members. Locally, some families tried to ensure their political influence by being active in local organisations and the municipal council. Voting usually took place along family lines, as illustrated by a conversation I had with Mrs. Dimitra:

*We were talking about the town council where there had been a spate of resignations although elections had only been held six months previously. We were both irritated but for different reasons as it emerged that Mrs. Dimitra had family connections. Referring to the resignation of one particular councillor she commented indignantly “and why did he do that. We had voted for him, and his cousin had also been a candidate. So we had had to choose, and now...”*

Forced to choose between two family members in the run up to elections, the family had now been let down by the resignation of the member they had finally voted in. They had lost the influence they had over local policy.

This system of informal family networks connected to small-scale authority and power relations has been characteristic of Greek society for generations. The extended period of Ottoman governance prevented the emergence of a Greek ruling class that would impose a clear system of economic or political domination (Tsoukalas, 1991). Families therefore were able to extend their influence wherever possible and through all sectors of society and this could be seen in this aspect of family occupation. In terms of social capital, the family was a primary network providing access to resources, while the primary characteristic of the capital that was accessed was that it was trustworthy (Coleman, 1988b; Lin, 2006). Social capital will be discussed further in the following chapter.

Family occupation emphasises the essentially transactional nature of daily life in the town where people grew up within a network of family relationships. Opportunities and demands for occupation together with the form occupation took (the discussions and advice, sharing of skills and knowledge, the practical co-doing), were primarily within



the family. Through occupation family identity but also practical and emotional relatedness were in an ongoing process of re-construction. The family was experienced as a safe, familiar place. The family was also the source of local authority and power as the family interacted with the wider public sphere.

However, as with all aspects of the multidimensional situation, such a complex web of relations required an ongoing balancing of conflicting demands, not only with the wider context but also between family members, and this will be explored in the following section.

## **Maintaining Balance in the Family**

As can be seen, occupation in the town primarily involved the family, whether as an ideal form that guided what should be done and the kind of family that should be maintained, or through the web of relationships that led to numerous forms of family occupation. However, the town should not be considered a traditional collectivistic society where the individual has been described as subservient to group norms and values (Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002). While there were distinct features of interdependence, the individual also experienced their own needs and sense of self, suggesting a self constructed in relationships and events, as well as of the body and internally experienced (Kinsella, 2005; Wainwright & Rapport, 2005). Therefore there was inevitably a tension between the demands of the family and the self which was constituted in such relationships, and the person's needs and autonomy (Kagitcibasi, 1996), within the ever changing situation.

This ongoing maintenance of balance occurred both at the macro level of long-term organisation of occupation, but also at the moment by moment micro level. At the macro level the family worked to develop a balance or coordination that best fitted the multiple elements of their ever changing situation. For example, the birth of a child brought the grandparents into the daily cycle of care with the young parents; a working professional woman hired a cousin to help with the household tasks; two brothers shared the ploughing of their fields in the Spring; and Michaelis managed his

relationship with his mother by talking to her every day on the phone but only seeing her once a week.

Most people managed some kind of balance over time between the needs and demands of the family members living within the same home. For example, although Frances did not always like having her mother-in-law living in the house with them, she also recognised the advantages, wondering if she would have stayed with her husband if her mother-in-law was not there: *"They keep each other company; I wouldn't have liked it to have been just the two of us in the house. When he was ill I could still go out and she looked after the children. Now they sit and talk together. I can go to work."*

There were also strategies by which a person made a space for themselves without direct action or confrontation. Frances talked about her need to have some time on her own and how difficult she found it to be always surrounded by relatives. She described her solution, telling me that her children had learnt that when she went to pluck her eyebrows it could take a very long time; being in the bathroom was the only time she could be sure of some time on her own.

While in these ways overall patterns of occupation emerged at a macro level, there was often an ongoing tension at the moment-by-moment micro level. This was a tension both between the various family members over decision making, control and power within the family as a unit and also for each member to balance their own sense of autonomy and relatedness. Chapter 4 introduced the idea of tactics, which de Certeau (1984) described as the response of the individual to use, manipulate and divert the regulating structures of society. Here, I use the idea of tactics not only in relation to society but in relation to any situation in which the individual experiences a threat to their self and their needs (including their self as family member). In line with De Certeau's work, occupation as tactics was a manipulation of events in order to turn them into opportunities. This was not a planned and strategic response but a seizing of opportunities, a response of the moment. In order for such occupation to be effective, the individual needed to be able to recognize the temporal, spatial and social dimensions of the moment, and to be skilled in using ongoing tiny adjustments of verbal and non-verbal behavior to maintain their position or to affect the situation.

In this transactional understanding of occupation as process where the situation was always fluid, tactics enabled small shifts of power in order to preserve a good enough balance. Of course, tactics occurred in an ever changing situation, so that any advantage gained was inevitably temporary. Frances frequently resorted to non-verbal tactics, as she said she could no longer be bothered to try to argue as she always lost to the combined voices of her mother- and sister-in-law:

*One day I bumped into Frances, it was after ten and she nodded at me saying, 'yes, I know I am late', referring to her work. She had a bag of supermarket shopping in her hand, 'I'm just going to leave this at the bottom of the stairs'. She then added with some tension in her voice: 'they can take it up'. Tired and rushing to get to work, fed up with her mother-in-law and husband sitting at home, she seized an opportunity to force a change in the flow of occupation and the balance of her relationships.*

Not everybody was skilled at using tactics. Katerina talked about her lack of experience making her vulnerable, not able to 'read' the situation in her husband's family when she entered it as a bride (Georgas et al., 2001). She seemed to be describing a situation where she was unable to position herself successfully, because she was not able to use the fleeting opportunities successfully. Within the intensely social living arrangements of many families, being able to use tactics successfully was an important way by which an individual could maintain some space for their self. Tactics were also important in balancing relationships within the wider social fabric as will be discussed in the following chapter.

## **Reflections on Maintaining the Family**

This chapter focused on maintaining the family as one of three plots of the narrative of occupation in the town. Values and beliefs around the ideal family and the occupation required in maintaining that ideal emerged as important aspects, together with an understanding that family was inherent to many and various elements of the situation, emerging and maintained by both practical and relational needs. Family was embedded in memories and stories, the embodied experience of growing up in the

town, the places in which occupation took place and in the ongoing family occupation which predominated throughout the days and weeks. Family included an extended group of people with links of blood and marriage, known and trusted. Therefore, maintaining the family refers to an ongoing complex web of occupation, (from daily *dhouleiés* to unique celebrations), which incorporated people with their skills, needs and characters, as well as places, ideals, values and memories. Family was a multidimensional and dynamic concept, and that occupation was of the family as much as of the self, may be understood within the transactional perspective underpinning this discussion.

Theoretical models developed in occupational therapy, as has already been discussed, focus particularly on the individual who is placed at the centre, with the family described as one of the elements of the wider social context (Law et al., 1997), and along with community and population groups may be considered an alternative focus of intervention to the individual (Townsend & Polatajko, 2007). However, research from the field of family studies reports that family living is considered the single most important aspect of life across the European Union, and family events as the most important of people's lives (Bernardes, 1997), suggesting that a focus limited to the individual may be ignoring an important element of people's occupation.

In the occupational therapy and occupational science literature, family is primarily discussed in regards to children and the elderly, and particularly those requiring care (Stagnitti, 2005). There are discussions of the impact of the child's disability on the family (e.g. Bagby, Dickie, & Baranek, 2012; Case-Smith, 2004), and the importance of family for the older person as a source of care and a sense of well-being through occupation (Bonder, 2006). The majority of studies tend to describe uni-directional patterns of connections between the generations (Furlong, 2001), similar to the discussion of care of household, children and the elderly in the first thread of this chapter.

However, it is in studies of parents and children that the traditional focus on the individual in the occupational therapy and occupational science literature, has expanded to consider co-occupations (Zemke & Clark, 1996a), the importance of intersubjectivity in the mutual engagement of adults and children in play (Lawlor, 2003),

and the interdependence of the entire family (Fingerhut, 2013; Stagnitti, 2005; Werner DeGrace, 2004). Despite this, the family and its occupational processes throughout the life course (e.g. with adults) or across the generations have not been studied, and the idea of family occupation as discussed in this study has not been addressed. While family occupation may not be as established in places where there is greater mobility of populations, individualism, and greater economic independence, it has been suggested that there is not sufficient known about what 'really' happens in families, how they are constructed (Bernardes, 1997), their interdependence over time (Furlong, 2001) and in terms of this study, their occupational processes.

While family occupation and the importance of the household may not have been discussed specifically in the literature, there has been discussion of families, rituals and routines, belonging and inter-relatedness. As was evident in the town, the literature also supports the importance for maintaining family identity and cohesion of rituals, traditions and memories of family, particularly incorporated in occupation such as preparing traditional meals or dishes (Hocking et al., 2002; Penman, 2001), and family events such as Christmas (Shordike & Pierce, 2005). This would suggest that the emotional relatedness of family members is significant and expressed in occupation throughout many parts of the world including those frequently referred to as more individualistic, where perhaps physical and practical independence is greater than that observed in the town.

The later addition of belonging to the original synthesis of occupation as doing, being and becoming in the exemplary work of Ann Wilcock (1999) suggests a hesitance to discuss and explore the notion of interdependence. This important idea of belonging is also interpreted in various ways according to the context in which studies are located. For example, Iwama (2006, p. 105) speaking from the perspective of Japanese society, discussed the primary importance of the individual's place in the social hierarchy and belonging as the "ethos of their existence". Studies located in North America focused primarily on the individual and in continuation the importance of their sense of belonging to a place or group (Rebeiro, Day, Semeniuk, O'Brien, & Wilson, 2001; Riley, 2008).

Therefore although the individual focus of occupational therapy in the Western world has been challenged and the importance of interdependence suggested (Hammell, 2009a; Iwama, 2006), it may be suggested that interdependence is a complex and dynamic concept. It may vary from the individual who nevertheless desires a sense of belonging and place to those who experience family as more important than self, as discussed in one study with participants of Albanian origins (Heigl, Kinebanian, & Josephsson, 2011). Interdependence as explored in this study, with both emotional and practical dimensions, was experienced and maintained in different ways and to different degrees within each unique family group.

To conclude, a transactional understanding of occupational processes facilitates understanding of the fundamental importance of family in this town. From the embodied experience of growing up in a situation saturated with family memories, engaged in daily occupation with places and people that are part of one's family, and warned to 'not shame' the family, to life as an adult with one's own parents and children to care for, and surrounded by familiar family members with their skills, knowledge, and companionship, occupation is primarily of and with the family. Important to the understanding of family are also the economic conditions of everyday life and the availability of health and welfare services. It also became evident that the person was not a separate, bounded, individual but was an essential part of the family. While autonomous and recognising the needs of his or her own self, the person was also part of and recognised the needs of the family, with self and family intertwined through a complex web of occupation. The individual while part of the situation was not at its centre.

This chapter has focused on maintaining the family, as a second important reason with which things were done in the town, and intertwining with maintaining the self-in-the-world explored in the preceding chapter. In some ways this discussion of the family has suggested the family as a closed unit, shaping and framing much of daily occupation. However, the third and final plot underpinning daily life in the town, developed in the following chapter, explores maintaining the social fabric through occupation in the neighbourhoods and public places of the town, with not only family, but also one's *paréa* (companions) and through *gnostoí* (known people).

## **Chapter 8: Maintaining the Social Fabric**

Beyond the family and the individual was the social world, stretching out from the neighbourhood, to the town, the *patrídha* (fatherland) and beyond. While the preceding chapters have included discussion on the importance of all of these for daily occupation, the focus of this, the third and final narrative, is specifically on the community, the town of Melissa, and will explore the importance of occupation in maintaining the particular social fabric of this town.

### **Introducing the Social Fabric**

The social fabric has been described as including a variety of elements such as social and economic institutions as well as more abstract concepts such as governance and social coherence (Haacker, 2004). While social relations are seen to be at its core (Huijbens, 2012), the human ecology approach emphasizes the importance and interrelationship of institutional, spatial and temporal factors (Henderson, 1995). The importance of a strong social fabric for health is increasingly recognized, and is included in debates around health promotion (S. Kumar & Preetha, 2012), while rupture to the social fabric is of concern both for countries endeavouring to rebuild following war (Hoogenboom & Vieille, 2010), and as a result of violence in communities in the West (Enander, Lajksjo, & Tedfeldt, 2010). The transactional perspective has already provided valuable insight into the multidimensional elements that make up any situation, and the social fabric can be seen to be not only about relationships and interactions but also essentially incorporates the social structures and institutions of the town and broader economic processes. However, this discussion will continue to focus primarily on occupation, and the exploration of how, through occupation, the multiple elements of the community transact in an ongoing process of maintaining the social fabric.

In this chapter the metaphor of threads will again be used to identify, discuss and then weave together three different aspects of this occupational process. First, informal encounters in public places will be explored, that is, ongoing daily interactions and how these are constructed within but also maintain social relationships and public places. Secondly, participation in public affairs will be illustrated, primarily through a discussion of 'the Kallikratis affair', the reactions and responses to a change in municipal laws. Finally, a community event, and specifically the carnival Bonfire will be discussed to illustrate the importance of such community celebrations for the cohesion of the community and the balance with mundane everyday life.

## **Informal Encounters in Public Places**

Throughout the preceding chapters the intensely social nature of everyday life has been discussed, from the need experienced to go out of the house, to the extended network of family occupations. In this section I will focus on the ongoing encounters in public space, including the neighbourhood, the streets and the squares, with friends, family, *gnostoí* (people known) and one's *paréa* (companions). From early in the morning until late at night I saw not only groups sitting in the *kafeneío* having the ritual *kafé*, but also people standing and chatting on street corners, at the doorway to and in shops, and young people walking up and down the street or sitting on the wall or steps in the square chatting and eating ice-creams. People who had met in the morning often met again in the afternoon, and seeing and hearing them come together was like entering an ongoing flow of communication and action, as a conversation or occupation started the day before or in the morning was continued as if there was no intervening temporal space.

Informal encounters took three main forms: those of the neighbourhood; those that took place in the main squares and particularly while having a *kafé*; and those that took place between *gnostoí* (people known) regarding businesses and services. They maintained the social fabric in a variety of ways, including establishing and maintaining relationships, maintaining the ongoing flow of information and engaging people in public debate around matters of common importance, maintaining a moral code around



acceptable public behavior, and working to do *dhouleiés* within the established social and economic structure. These will be explored in the following sections.

### **The neighbourhood.**

Coming between the public setting of the streets and squares and the privacy of one's home was the *yeitoniá* (the neighbourhood). The neighbourhood offered the opportunity for practical help and companionship and these relationships were worked at and reestablished through the ongoing occupation of neighbours. Women chatted from their balconies, provided each other with missing ingredients or ideas for lunch, sat together for coffee and some still embroidered or made lace together. Mr. Nikos, like other men, often sat with his neighbours in the evening for a glass of wine.

The social fabric of the neighbourhood was also strengthened through shared celebratory occupation in which all would participate. Although the reduced number of people living in many neighbourhoods meant that some of these events were less common than in the past, they still continued. For example, neighbours would always drop in on one's name day and were invited to major family events, such as an engagement or marriage, and street parties were held in the neighbourhoods during the Carnival period. However, Easter Sunday continued to be the major event of the year, when all the families of the neighbourhood cooked their lambs together over one common *lákka* (pit), with shared snacks while the lambs were cooking, and singing traditional songs and dancing later in the day.

Good relationships between neighbours were consciously worked at through traditions embedded in occupation, chiefly that of the women. Small acts of giving were important as Evyeneia described: *"if you cook something you take some to the neighbour, or to your yiayiá (grandmother, but here generic term for old woman) who lives downstairs. And if they cook something that they know is your favourite they will bring you some. And you never return an empty plate, you always put something on it, a couple of chocolates...And when I get married they will not just bring some gift, but will ask what they can make. And they make the breads – like in the museum – the decorated breads. They did that for my engagement too, and they brought gifts, a plant, a little something. Yes, we still have a neighbourhood and that is good"*.

As Evyeneia mentioned not only giving food was important but also exchange – if you went to someone’s house and they had just baked a pie, cake or biscuits they would insist on giving you some to take home on a plate. When you returned the plate you would return it with something on it. The following conversation between Martha and Mrs. Dimitra illustrated this further:

*Mrs. Dimitra said to Martha: “I have put two jars in your car - they are for my friend Maria - so you can drop them off when you pass. I haven’t put anything in them, but I don’t have anything at the moment”. Martha reassured her, replying “it doesn’t matter, she won’t misunderstand you”. Later I asked Martha about this and she said that it is not ypochreotikó (an obligation) to return a borrowed plate or jar with something in it and you only do it if you have something, but it is something “yia ti triví” (for the rubbing together).*

*Triví* means friction but is also used in the sense that if you rub with something you get to know it better, and it was with this sense that Martha used it here - rubbing together with others helped the connection between you.

Generally food, particularly that which was home-grown or made, was shared with neighbours, friends and visitors. Katerina brought me a bag full of cherries from her garden, while Mr. Nikos never let me leave his shop without thrusting something into my hands – a *glukó* (wrapped cake) or a quince that a woman had brought for him from her garden. My husband took our dog for a walk and came back with a pocket full of walnuts from a neighbour. Food ‘circulated’ through the neighbourhood and one’s wider social network, cementing relationships and welcoming visitors.

As mentioned, the neighbourhood could be seen as an intermediate place between the home and public space. In the public spaces much of the occupation that took place appeared casual and unplanned and the term ‘hanging out’ could be used to describe it. White (2007, p. 115) captured the complexity of hanging out. He defined it as “the occupation of ‘doing nothing’ by passively observing, idly talking or engaging in non-purposeful actions such as walking around without a specific aim in mind”, but also identified the importance of the feelings of social connection, of generations coming together and of the excitement of the slight unpredictability of being in public spaces.

This complexity was evident in the town where casual going out, including going for a *vólta* (stroll/ride), was experienced as a need of the self especially related to balance, as explored in Chapter 6, but was also experienced as important for entering the social flow. Letta seemed to be describing this when one day I asked what news there was, and she replied: *"I don't know yet, I haven't been down yet"*. By down she meant to the lower square and this was where she perceived she would learn the day's news and get to know what was going on.

'Going for a coffee' was one of the most popular free-time occupations in the town (and also in Greece) and will be discussed in some detail illustrating this notion of entering the social flow.

### ***Páme yia kafé. Let's go for a coffee!***

*With some friends I discussed going for a coffee, which, as they said, had nothing to do with the coffee but rather was to do with going out and seeing your friends, talking about what was happening to you with other people and catching up on news. It was a long, leisurely activity with one coffee (or tea, chocolate, soft drink, maybe a beer or ouzo) lasting several hours. They commented how they had not been to any other country that had as nice and comfortable cafés where you could sit for a long time, chatting and reading if you wanted, as in Greece. Patricia (retired) said that she could not stay in the house during the day, but each day by eleven she was out, going for a coffee with her friends. She didn't mind staying in her house in the evening, but in the day she wanted to be out.*

Some of the retired men went for a coffee as many as three times a day.

*Mr. Stathis told me that he had been to Anna's kafeneío for a coffee at seven o'clock. I asked if he ever has his coffee at home. He said his wife used to make coffee, but he actually doesn't like coffee. "But if you go to the kafeneío at seven in the morning what can you drink – ouzo, beer, tsipouro? No, I go to see what's happening, what news there is, what everyone is going to be doing, to see who's died. In the past we went to see who was born or married, now it is to see who's died". Another day I bumped into him, he told me he had finished his jobs by eleven and was going for his 'máthima'*

*(class) as he laughingly called it – an ouzo with his paréa (companions) at Anna's again. In the early morning his paréa may not be there, "it is not compulsory attendance" he jokes, but at eleven they all meet. He went again at six in the afternoon and usually two or three friends would pass by. He says he cannot let a day go by that he will not pass through the square. I ask him "to check up on things?" and he laughed and said "no, but if I don't go one day, and Christos doesn't the next and Petros the next..." He leaves the sentence hanging, implying that such absences would threaten the social fabric.*

Going for a coffee was to learn the news, to see what was happening, but also, as can be seen from Mr. Stathis' last comment, it was a need to keep relationships going, a reconfirmation of your place in the social fabric and by the same means, maintaining it. *Kérasma* (treating) was as important in the *kafeneío* as the exchange of food was in the neighbourhood. The first man to arrive usually treated the next and so on, and *kérasma* was seen to be an expression of good-will and generosity (Papataxiarchis, 1991). Guests were also always treated (by both men and women) and only after several years were my husband and I allowed to treat local friends, (especially if we said it was because of a family event, e.g. a birthday, new car, successful exam results), and also our plumber, electrician etc., especially if they had helped us out recently.

While the majority of people sat with others, some people regularly preferred to sit on their own, or, as Yiannis described, you may want to be out (as discussed in Chapter 6) but not talking:

*Because of the heat he had been coming to the square every morning at seven thirty for his coffee. He sat on his own: "I don't want to talk to anyone until I have had my coffee and at least four cigarettes." He pointed to a table apart that he had sat at and said "someone came and wanted to join me but I told them to go away, that I wanted my quiet".*

It was not only the older retired men that would meet up for coffee. Working men met up after work, young people from 15 years old or so went out with their *paréa*

(companions), often to neighbouring villages, while women met up when they could create an opportunity, as Alexandra commented:

*"I think yesterday the best part of the day was a half hour when I had a coffee with two friends - we had just half an hour before I picked up the child from school, and we talked and I forgot everything. We didn't talk about each other's problems with school or the children, we just had a 'daft/fun' conversation, and it really made me feel better".*

Ioanna also explained to me one reason why there were so many people at the annual meeting of the Folk Law Association: *"don't think we are coming for this, but it's a good chance to get out and we will go for a coffee afterwards. Will you come?"*

Going for a coffee encompassed a wide variety of purposes. Women, in particular seemed to see it primarily as a way of relaxing, a chance to see friends and perhaps talk about the week's activities but also to have lighthearted conversations about matters of little importance, for example, gossip from Hollywood, fashion and TV shows. For others it was a time to do business, learn about new products, business opportunities and discuss bank lending rates. Politics, cars, food and exercise, illness and all the happenings of everyday life were discussed, advised upon and argued over.

It was also a time to watch and be watched. I found it disconcerting when I was talking to someone in the square they would often give me very little eye contact, but rather were constantly watching every movement in the street over my shoulder and might break off the conversation to greet someone. Certain *kafeneío*, such as the Cookoo, had good 'vantage' points: *The entire glass facade overlooked the square and I commented on what a good view there was. Ioanna, retorted: "it's the best place to sit to keep an eye on what is going on. There are plenty of people who come here just to sit and watch everyone else's business".*

Throughout the period of study in the town I was frequently reminded that not only was I observing the goings on of the town, but the townspeople were observing me:

*As I went to the car Dimitris greeted me. I asked him if he had been around as I hadn't seen him. He said "Yes, I have been here and I have seen you – yesterday you were*

*wandering around the lower square, today sitting in the square and going to the museum...*"

On several occasions, knowing that I was being watched made me feel uncomfortable, a feeling that other people, women in particular, seemed to share. Some of the women seemed to feel that the men were checking up on them. Frances told a story of how she was 'visited' at work:

*The previous day one of the old men came to check up on her [her phrase]. She thought it was because she had been working more shifts than usual. She said "they had obviously been sitting there in the square, gossiping between themselves, wondering why I was going more often - if I had a man in here. And then one of them will have said 'I'll go and check', and there he was at the door checking up on me. I felt like saying - 'you can go and tell them that I don't have a man in here'".*

Therefore, the squares could also be considered disciplinary spaces, in which "individuals can be watched and assessed, their qualities measured" (Giddens, 1984, p. 146). While people seemed to regard entering public spaces daily as essential for news, companionship and to be part of the social fabric, they also were then potentially both the perpetrators and object of surveillance. The gendered nature of much of daily life has been discussed and within that framework it was usually the men who watched, particularly the older, retired men, several groups of whom were to be seen sitting in one or more of the many *kafeneío*, at most hours of the day. Surveillance seemed to go on for a number of reasons, and Makis and Yiannis, watching both men and women, seemed to do it mainly to have something to talk about. However, in Frances' description, there were echoes of the traditional gender segregation of participation in occupation in public places (Cowan, 1991) and men's control of women's moral behavior. This was also evident in Katerina's comment that she would be ashamed (*ntrépomaí*) to dance in public with the Folk Law Association, while her mother, now a widow, rarely left the house as she continued to perceive it as immoral for a woman to go out alone.

Some women seemed to notice the ongoing surveillance and feeling of being known more, adjusting their occupation accordingly and a number commented how much they

liked Athens where nobody knew them. However, other women seemed to be much more comfortable and commented positively on the experience of knowing everybody and being known. While this surveillance was certainly experienced negatively by some women, parents were comfortable knowing that their children and teenagers were being 'watched' and that if necessary a quiet word would be had with the father.

As well as providing opportunities for social communication and relaxation, informal encounters in public places were also about maintenance and control as people learnt what was going on and of changes and opportunities, created alliances and cemented relationships, and in some cases seemed to be working to preserve the traditional way of life, morally and practically. They were about power, status and influence.

As in the family, at the moment-to-moment micro level of occupation, tactics were employed as people 'fought' to gain advantage of the conversation or activity, or as people in weaker positions worked to maintain a sense of their own efficacy. Tactics included sitting strategically to observe the square, raising one's voice to dominate a conversation, implying one had inside information about an occurrence that one was not sharing with the group, and also withholding information until a strategic moment in the conversation. Sometimes the use of tactics was a complex 'dance' between the people involved. The following is an example that took place in one of the tavernas, between Stefanos the owner, and some customers:

*The customers were a group of four visitors, who had come in with one local man, who seemed to be hoping to impress his guests by using a rather imperious style with Stefanos. In response, Stefanos worked to maintain his authority as owner and chef without annoying the local, who was a regular customer. First he positioned himself to stand at the opposite end of the table to the local, maintaining command of the space, and then directed his discussion of the menu to the guests rather than the local. He acknowledged the local's knowledge of his menu, while implying some creative twists to it, which only he, as chef, had knowledge of. The local was satisfied as his guests were fascinated by the creative chef and pleased with their local friend who brought them there. Stefanos was no longer the under-trod 'village cook', but an experienced chef working magic with local ingredients.*

In the complex transactional web of the social fabric, tactics were one of the primary ways that balance was maintained of the social fabric on a moment-to-moment micro level. This discussion of informal encounters in public spaces has illustrated their importance for the ongoing maintenance of the social fabric. How these encounters are facilitated will now be explored.

### **Facilitating informal encounters.**

Informal encounters, including 'going for coffee', were important for being in the flow of social life in all its complexity, and a number of factors facilitated such occupation. Undoubtedly the climate facilitated a way of life that largely took place outside for many months of the year. In addition, the nature and use of public space, temporal rhythms and social relationships facilitated both informal encounters in public places in general but also the conditions necessary for the specific characteristics of 'going for coffee'.

### ***Public space.***

The importance of places in guiding the organisation of daily activities is well recognised (Crabtree, 2000; Hamilton, 2011). Public space had a number of specific characteristics in the town which facilitated informal encounters. Firstly, the size of the town with the limited commercial area which also ran through the lower square, enabled frequent physical encounters. Additionally, the fluid boundaries between places of work and leisure have been discussed and public space was also a place for both. Most public spaces were also inclusive places. Although some groups might frequent one *kafeneío* in particular, people of all ages and groups were part of the space as a whole and no one was excluded. Finally and perhaps most importantly, was the sense of public ownership of public spaces – it belonged to 'us'. This sense emerged in occupation: Mrs Dimitra brought a tray of walnuts to shell as she sat in the upper square; Toula filled the water jug for her office from the stone font just across the street; and children played in the square and the nooks and crannies of the municipal buildings and used the sloping walls of the fountain as a slide. Changes to the squares such as re-surfacing and planting of new trees were discussed and argued over in the *kafeneío*.



The *kafeneío* and *tavérnas* although privately owned or rented, also had a sense of belonging to all, reversing the more usual hierarchical power relationships of owner to customer (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992). This seemed to be primarily because of the degree to which the owner and customer were known to each other. Most of these places were run on a daily basis by their owners, who were known and who depended for their business on their customers. There was a flexible sense of give and take between running a business and satisfying the known customer. Some of this sense was evident in customers' occupation, for example, in the way customers rearranged tables and chairs to fit the size of their group and where they wanted to sit, or went in and out of the *tavérna* or *kafeneío* to fetch their own drink or arrange an order to their satisfaction. It was not expected that children should eat the large ice-cream sundaes sold by the *kafeneío*, but could get the smaller (and cheaper) ones sold by the kiosk, and a friend once brought his food from one *tavérna* to eat with us at another. Advice and criticism was freely given, particularly by the men, to anyone opening a new commercial enterprise, regarding anything from suggestions for an appropriate name, the colour and lighting scheme, and in the case of a *tavérna*, the menu.

### ***Temporal rhythms.***

Essential to the informal encounters described in this section was the possibility for flexible temporal arrangements. Generally, as has been discussed, temporal rhythms in the town were fluid, and rather than routines there was a reflexive responsiveness to the needs of the self and others. The opening hours of the *kafeneío* and bars usually depended on customers: Anna opened before seven in the morning because the older farmers, like Mr. Stathis, got up before dawn. At busy times of the year and during a heat wave in the summer she would stay open until the last customer left which might be after three in the morning. As well as supporting flexible meeting arrangements and responsiveness to needs, this flexibility of opening times also encouraged a sense of ownership of the public spaces.

The informality of 'going out' with flexible meeting times was also possible due to the large number of family, friends and acquaintances that people had. Appointments could be delayed when the other person knew you would be in the square and that you would always find someone else to talk to if you had to wait until they arrived. The form of

occupation and the people involved were continually reshaped with a wave of the hand, a shout or a whistle, a beep of a horn, or a call on a mobile phone.

### ***Social relationships.***

Finally the nature of social relationships also supported ongoing informal encounters. When you went out you would bump into someone you knew, you would stand and chat, and learn the news, as Letta described. When you went for a coffee or out for a drink you would meet up with your *paréa* (companions), and the *paréa* was an essential part of going out. While *paréa* is usually translated as companions this does not entirely capture the concept of the word as used in Greek. Your *paréa* was the group of people with whom you usually went out. While including friends, not all members of the *paréa* were necessarily friends (described separately as *filoi*), and it was generally an inclusive group that would ensure that no-one remained alone for an evening out or at holiday times. Couples rarely went out alone, either for an evening or for a holiday, and having *paréa* was considered essential to having a good time. When you went out with your *paréa* you were expected to contribute to the atmosphere by telling jokes, joining in the *kalabourí* (banter), and generally ensuring that the conversation stayed cheerful, lighthearted and inclusive (Cowan, 1990). The *paréa* was the basic social form in the public sphere, providing a balance to the demands of family.

Entering public space and particularly *going for a kafé* has been discussed in some detail due to the centrality of this occupation to time not given over to *dhouleiés*. A final form of occupation as informal encounters was occupation that involved *gnostoi* (known people).

### **Occupation between *gnostoi*.**

A third form of informal encounter was those that took place with a *gnostós* (pl. *gnostoi*), meaning someone known. *Gnostós* was the final level of relationship in the town (after family, friends and your *paréa*), after which all other people were *ksénoi* (foreigner or stranger). Being *gnostós* implied that something was known about the person, perhaps who was their family, their relationship to the town, or through the

business they had. With many people occupation was involved, as some sort of exchange led to an *ypochréosi* (obligation) which needed to be repaid, as the following examples demonstrate:

*Letta bought all her vegetables from a particular shop keeper, because the shopkeeper bought all her plants from Letta. Roula always had her coffee at one particular kafeneío because the owner bought the cosmetics that Roula sold.*

However, dealing with *gnostoí* was not only around existing obligations, it also involved maintaining a balance of relationships, as Mrs. Ketty described:

*Mrs. Ketty, explained how she went alternatively to three of the four village butchers: "The one is owned by a man who was in the same class as my second son at school. The other is the koumbára (best man) of my cousin, and the other lives in our neighbourhood ...what can you do?"*

Most decisions around where people shopped, ate, had coffee, and arranged events were based on a conscious process of using such occupation to maintain connections, to balance obligations or to support local business people. This applied to both individual occupation, but also to group occupation organised by local Associations. For example:

*Mr. Kosta said how they had had the funeral meal in one taverna and the memorial service in another "even though they aren't from here [the owners of the latter], but it's good to support both".*

*Alexandra ordered the Christmas biscuits for the Farmer's Cooperative annual holiday from the two bakers, "half and half, so they can't complain ..."*

*The Women's Association organized their annual celebration of Women's Day to be held at The Los Angeles taverna, one of the committee members commenting "We usually have it at Thanopoulos' taverna, but it's good to support the other businesses too"*

Obviously these small acts that maintained the social fabric could also be used to isolate people or to exert power. It was perceived that the *Melissótes* in particular, exerted such control. *A shop keeper complained of how the townspeople supported you but when you do well they also act as if it is their achievement "look how we made you" they will say. "It is so frustrating" she commented.*

An extremely successful manufacturer, with his business just out of the town, told me that when he had been considering expanding his small business he was advised *"do it if you want to and think you can, but don't expect any support from the village". He said "and they were right, from the moment I expanded, the village stopped supporting me"*

This experience was not unique. Another shop keeper commented that some people in the town had stopped shopping from her after her two children had achieved entrance to one of the top university departments in the country. When I asked why she replied: *"because they can't bear to see other people doing well".*

It is difficult to explain why this happened, although it seemed clear from the number of people and the variety of occasions on which it was mentioned that it did. Perhaps it was due to a resistance to change together with an ongoing attempt to maintain the social and economic balance within the town, ensuring that no one family got too far ahead of the other, particularly one's own, family.

### **Informal encounters to maintain the social fabric.**

This first thread of the narrative exploring maintaining the social fabric has explored a variety of occupation, referred to as informal encounters, which can be seen to be fundamental to the social fabric. Here occupation created a web of relationships which influenced and were part of all aspects of life, from providing companionship and relaxation, to practical help and advice, to supporting and controlling economic development, and reinforcing an expected framework of moral behaviour.

Social capital has been described as the resources embedded in one's social networks (Lin, 2006). It can be seen how these informal encounters in the neighbourhood and the wider town were important for the ongoing re-establishment of a variety of networks

beyond that of the family, including the *paréa* and *gnostoí*, as people came together even daily. Such dense or closed networks facilitated trust, support and reciprocal exchange (Coleman, 1988b), particularly evident in the idea of having an *upochréosi* (obligation) to *gnostoí* but also evident between neighbours in the sharing of food and return of filled plates. As Martha described, such occupation helped the *triví* – the rubbing together – getting to know and to be familiar, trusting and caring between neighbours and *gnostoí*. Other resources that are accessible to the individual through their social networks are information and social norms (Coleman, 1988b), and the daily ‘going to the square’ was obviously the primary source of local news but also the place where national events would be discussed and often some form of common view on them established. This was particularly evident during the ‘Kallikratis affair’ that will be discussed in the next section. Social norms, shared opinions of what was moral, right and desirable, were also re-established on a daily basis, including those that could be seen as largely positive such as the importance of education (discussed in the previous chapter), but also that were restrictive, such as the expected behaviour of women in public. Lin (2006) discussed how such dense or closed networks may have access to less diverse resources, and it seemed that there was a tacit awareness of this. There was an ongoing desire by the permanent residents of the town to learn about what was going on in Athens or other parts of Greece or Europe, while many of the more active farmers visited trade exhibitions in and beyond Greece, Themistoklis established business connections in both Turkey and Romania, and some of the men visited Albania and Romania with recent immigrants visiting their homes.

The organisation of public space was central to such occupation together with the flexible temporal rhythms and the inter-relating social groups of the *paréa*, *gnostoí*, friends and family. Oldenberg (1997), discussing contemporary American society, supported the importance of informal public life and the necessity of ‘third spaces’ in addition to the home and work place, for example coffee shops and pubs. In describing their features he mentions many that were evident in the public places and particularly the *kafeneío*, of the town: flexible and long opening hours, located close to home, with a good number of regulars, with a fairly plain physical appearance and a playful atmosphere. Usefully, he also points out that though important as places for relaxation, for equality of relationships removed from the intensity of those of the family, and for developing social contacts, they are also places that promote people to be active

citizens in the community, an idea reflecting Habermas' discussion of the importance of the public sphere for a functioning democracy (Haysom, 2011).

In the town it was evident the sense that people had of being part of a broader community alongside their own and their family's immediate interests. Also, as public spaces which offered equality of access, participation and freedom of speech, these places could be said to operationalise civil and political rights. Further participation in the organisations and associations related to administration both of the town as a whole and of particular groups within it, will be discussed in the following section, the second thread of this narrative.

## **The Kallikratis Affair**

*"Everyone here is a president"* I was frequently told, with the implication that everyone was happy to have the position but not to do the work. There were numerous associations in the town organising and regulating various aspects of public life, including the Women's Association established to work for women's rights, the Folk Law Association which was responsible for the two museums and also ran classes for traditional dancing and the choir, associations for leisure pursuits and those related to the economic structures of the town such as the Association for Touristic Development and the Farmer's Cooperative (for a full list see *Appendix J*). The most influential local organisation was of course the Town Council with the Mayor at its head.

All the men I talked to and some of the women, were, or had engaged through occupation in one or more of these associations, including holding the position of president. Mr. Nikos had been on the board of the Parent-Teacher Association and had been elected twice to the Town Council. Frances had been involved in the local Scouts Group and was on the Board of the Folk Law Association. I asked Mr. Nikos why it was that so many people in the town were involved in unions, associations and community activities of one sort or another. He said (answering for himself as most of the townspeople did), *"I always wanted to do the good thing. I have helped many people with positions, work. I always like to have a lot of contact with people"*.

Mr. Nikos' final comment, that he liked to have contact with people, was perhaps at the core. As indicated in the previous discussion on informal encounters, the wider one's social networks, developed through occupation in the public sphere, the more resources (social capital) were available to oneself and one's family. Mr. Nikos refers to this when he mentions that he has helped many people with positions. In Frances' case, her motivation seemed to have been mainly towards doing something for her children, something different and getting out of the house, however for Mr. Nikos and other people I talked to, taking an active part in Associations and in public affairs was not only to be involved in something they were interested in, but also an opportunity for the individual and the family to have influence within the public sphere. This influence could be pragmatic – with control over funds, the direction of policy in certain areas, and access to knowledge, or could be more related to status and the image of being a good citizen. Mr. Sakkas, an active president of one of the associations, told me how difficult it was to get people on the board who really wanted to work *“they're all happy to sit in the square and proudly say they are on the board of this or that association, but when it comes to doing anything...”*

The few people I talked to who were active in an association and who hoped to work cohesively with their fellow citizens for the mutual advantage of all, were those who seemed to be most frustrated in their attempts. For example, Michaelis had a vision of the town as a thriving community, a good place to bring up children, and he was President of the Farming Co-operative and later was voted onto the Town Council and became Councillor responsible for Quality of Life. The main difficulties he seemed to face were related to other people's suspicion of his motives, and he, like others, complained that fellow members only worked for their own advantage and were indifferent to more collective processes. The perceived importance for status and power of involvement in public affairs, the distrust of the 'others' (whether other families or other towns), and the embodied status of being a *Mellisótis* will be further explored in the story of the “Kallikratis affair”. This is a vignette constructed from field notes of the events over a period of several months around the national reorganisation of municipal boundaries by which the town lost its status as head town of the municipality.

*The Kallikratis Law was introduced in 2010 as a national policy aiming to reduce the cost of local administration by constructing new, larger municipalities. From the early*

*stages of the development of the law the townspeople were confident that Melissa would head up the new municipality. During one evening out with my paréa (chiefly Melissótes), I asked them why they thought Melissa would be the new head. Their initial reaction to my question made it clear they had never considered the possibility of an alternative - Melissa was the natural head of the area, it was their right. As the discussion developed they supported this position by outlining the history of the town, as a kefalohóri (head village), and the current infrastructure of the town which included the Town Hall, Health Centre and Law Court. This seemed to be the general view not only of other people I talked to, but also in the wider area, as during the meetings of the municipalities of the county, Melissa was put forward with the support of all, to be the new head of the municipality.*

*However, when the law was finally published, the head of the new municipality was the nearest town, Kato Xóra. The outcry was intense. Melissótes from Athens arrived the same day in the town and informal crowds gathered in the upper square outside the Town Hall. There were endless phone calls to all possible gnostoí who might be able to help. It was immediately believed that there had been trickery, a deal, someone had 'pulled a fast one'. Stories spread of how in the final published version of the Law, the name Melissa had been crossed out and the new one, Kato Xóra, had been inserted at the last minute. Someone knew someone who had seen it. Then names began to circulate – the names of the politicians and civil servants in key position who were connected through family to Kato Xóra – and the people of Melissa were convinced they had been fooled.*

*A meeting of the people of the town was called, specifically stating that this was a matter for the town and that all political parties should unite to fight against the new Law. The meeting was held, so many people were present that they could not all fit in the hall, and it was decided to take action. A few days later four coach-loads of townspeople travelled to Athens to take part in demonstrations against the Law, joining dissatisfied people from other municipalities all over Greece. In the town on the same day all businesses and shops remained shut. The following week, on an afternoon of pouring rain, townspeople blocked the train line just outside Melissa, for three hours, in a symbolic gesture of protest. The mayor, already blamed for the fiasco, did not improve his standing by arriving late and staying dry. The train company bused*



*passengers between the previous and next station. The Minister of the Interior, Yiannis Ragousis, appearing in a meeting in Mallia, stated firmly that the Law would not be changed and he would not be blackmailed by such actions.*

*The older townspeople were angry that the younger generation no longer had the influence and connections in central government that they had had. Mr. Nikos' comment was typical: "why, when something like this happened in the past we would have been there, in the minister's office. What have this lot done – a demonstration!!" However, there was also the recognition that 'things' were changing – family connections and the power of votes was no longer sufficient against big business. And after a few weeks the general view that circulated in the kafeneío could be summed up in this comment: "the big powers always win. It seems that someone has bought up land near Kato Xóra for investment. It's big money, big investment, no wonder they got it..."*

*Following the initial period of shock, depression set in, and a number of people resigned their membership of the PASOK party, who was the government at the time. This seemed to be due to the clear understanding that the situation had been manipulated and corruption involved. Then anger emerged towards Kato Xóra. This was based on existing antagonism. Several months before these events, I had been told by Panos, in a comment more prophetic than he could imagine, that the Melissótes always saw themselves as better than those in neighbouring villages: "They had the people from Kato Xóra work for them like the Albanians today. But it will change - you will see - in a few years Kato Xóra will be far ahead".*

*Several people told me that only 40 years ago Kato Xóra had been a collection of barns, used by another village from further up the valley. A range of comments were made that also illustrated the moral inferiority of Kato Xóra: I was reminded of the brothels in the other town and how "all the noikokurió (households) are in debt because of them", of the drug use in that town and how "you cannot let your children go there" to the nightclubs.*

*These events seemed to threaten the fabric of the town. The temporal continuity between remembered past and imagined future had been ruptured together with the*

*image of the town as something unique and superior. The powerful 'other' both at national and local level was perceived to have made a fatal blow, from which, at least initially, the town was not expected to survive. "This is the end of us" was a comment I frequently heard.*

*The perceived limited solidarity within the town led to low expectations of a united effort to work together against this threat, although there were suggestions for a united abstention from the next local elections (which would have been the first time people did not vote along party lines). Finally a local candidate was put forward, although not considered particularly able, the town stood behind him, together with most of the smaller outlying villages. Following tense elections, at which it was considered a matter of duty to vote, and a night spent watching the results come in, the town's candidate was elected. Quiet satisfaction - "well it was only right" - was expressed.*

*Six months later, resignations from the town council came and people sighed in frustration as older conflicts surfaced and Mellisótes again showed their difficulties in working together. Almost two years later a balance had not been achieved with the neighbouring towns and the town council was having considerable difficulty working together. Closer links were being developed with the villages along the mountain "which fit together and should work together, much more than us with those valley towns", villages that also had problems with their own municipality. It was hoped that the boundaries might be revised and these mountain communities united.*

This incident is of interest for a number of reasons. While demonstrating the conservative attitudes of the Mellisótes, their identification with the town and an associated sense of superiority and pride, it also indicated the engagement of people in the political and civil functioning of the town, and recognition of the links of the town with central government. Evident was a quality of occupation in the town related to independence but also participation; the independence of the self-employed farmer or shop-owner, who recognized their own contribution to their family but also the social fabric of the town, who could even influence central politics through connections. The Kallikratis affair was not seen to demonstrate the impersonality of central government but rather that the town's connections and networks were not sufficiently developed compared to those of Kato Xóra.

This also demonstrated the sense of 'other'; beyond *gnostoí* were *ksénoí* – strangers and unknown. From the United States of America, Europe, and the government, to the public servants nationally and locally, administration was distrusted and seen to be potentially a threat to local and family interests. The traditional use of *méson* (contacts/means) to gain contracts, employment or other favours, while of direct benefit to the family and individual was, at the same time, an acknowledgement of the non-neutrality of administration. This could only create a sense of potential threat from and vulnerability to others with stronger, more powerful connections than one's own. A lack of transparency from central administration facilitated this ongoing insecurity. For example in the case of the Kallikratis Law the reasoning underpinning the decision to make Kato Xóra the municipal centre, rather than Melissa, was not publicly documented.

The untrustworthiness of the 'other', whoever that was, may have facilitated the ongoing presence of the idea of *métis*, which from ancient times had been used to describe the pride that Greek society had for someone who displayed skills and wiles in dealing with unpredictable and rapidly shifting situations (Raphals, 2003). De Certeau (1984) described it as comparable to his idea of tactics, and many of the stories told to the *paréa* in the *kafeneío* were of how individuals had 'pulled a fast one' and beat the system or another professional. Occupation in relation to administration and government as well as in individual encounters, was seen to be positive when it included quick thinking, seizing the opportunity and manipulating the situation in order to ensure the 'other' did not gain one over you.

Without a sense of a strong, independent and transparent administration, including the economic and legal systems, there was an ongoing questioning of laws and regulations – who was introducing them, why, what did they have to gain? Being involved in local organisations gave one the opportunity to gain a greater understanding of central decision making. As has been discussed, the long Ottoman occupation prevented the development of a ruling class in Greece (Tsoukalas, 1991), leading to the ongoing involvement of families in both national as well as local politics. In the town, cooperation for the organisation of local affairs was not an optional, altruistic enterprise, but an ongoing requirement in order to ensure at least the minimum of services for

one's family, with the synchronous recognition of the need for at least a basic level of cooperation with other families and individuals of the town.

The preceding discussion of the Kallikratis affair and the participation in local associations demonstrated the complexities of public life in the town. Personal and familial interests conflicted and coincided with community needs and policies. What was particularly evident was the unpredictable nature of change, the difficulty in foreseeing events, and the need for flexible occupation in order to respond effectively.

Participation in local administration and associations combined an interest in the town as a whole with the needs of self and family. Obviously, for different people these influences varied to their degree of relative importance. However, the community was not only a place of informal encounters and local organisation, it was also the site of celebration, which will be explored in the following section.

## **Community Celebrations - The Carnival Bonfire**

A third thread in this narrative of maintaining the social fabric of the town, explores a very different aspect of community life from either the informal daily encounters discussed in the first thread, or the participation in civic life discussed in the preceding thread with focus on the implementation of the Kallikratis Law. This third thread explores rituals, celebrations, holidays and symbols, the ongoing re-enactment of traditional events, with religious, secular and even pagan roots that provided another dimension, a particular richness to everyday life (see *Appendix I* for full list). One particular event will be described, the community Bonfire held on the last weekend of Carnival. The following story of this event constructed from field notes will be used as a foundation for a broader discussion of community celebrations.

*Following the celebrations of New Year and the Epiphany came the darkest and coldest part of the year. There was little work to be done in the fields, and in the homes only the ongoing daily tasks. Then, in February, the Apókries began, known in English as Carnival, a three week period of festivities before entering Lent.*

*The first sign that the Apókries were approaching was on the upper floor of the supermarket, on the central isle reserved for 'seasonal' goods. Here I was overwhelmed by the colours, feathers and sequins of carnival costumes (for adults and children), masks and wigs, packets of confetti and paper streamers, plastic drums, large hammers and trumpets. On the second weekend of Apókries small children started appearing in the square wearing their costumes, and over the following days the tavérnas started putting up decorations – brightly coloured streamers, plastic masks of clowns' faces and other decorations in preparation for Tsíkno Péempti (Smell-of-burning Thursday), when only barbequed meat was served. On the Saturday night of the third weekend the local bonfires in the neighbourhoods were held, with food prepared and served by the women of the neighbourhood with wine and dancing.*

*The final weekend of Carnival was approaching. The community Bonfire was held on the Saturday night, while on the Sunday there was a parade and an all day party, followed by a public holiday on the Monday, the first day of Lent when it was traditional to fly kites and eat seafood. Arrangements for the Bonfire were made at meeting of the town council with the Women's Association who were responsible for the food. On Monday posters appeared on shop doors and windows giving details of the events.*

*From Thursday preparations started in earnest and I could see across the valley tractors pulling trailers piled high with cut branches of pounári (holm oak) heading towards the town. These were unloaded making huge piles around the sides of the open space above the Upper Square where the Bonfire was to be held.*

*Behind the scenes other preparations were going on. The choir was practicing the Apókries songs, loud and bawdy, and Frances was shocked: "the old women belt out the words...You'd never hear them saying those words at other times". At the KAPI Mr. Kosta hummed the tunes to himself, and grinned wickedly when I asked them what he was singing, while other people there agreed when he said: "it's good, a chance to ksespáei (break-out) is needed". A conversation started about what costumes people had worn in the past, and Martha reminded everyone of the time she had dressed up as a groom with her husband as the bride and their friends as the wedding party.*

*The final weekend of carnival arrived. On Saturday morning members of board of the Women's Association distributed to all the women on their list, knocking on their front door, either a kilo of minced meat or a kilo of cheese (feta), depending on whether you had said you would make meat balls or a cheese pie for the Bonfire. Frances and Katerina congratulated each other that they were making cheese pies "can you imagine having to fry all those meat balls", they commented. In the afternoon the farmers got together to go to cut and collect the last loads of pounári – helped by wine and kopsídhia (barbequed lamb chops).*

*When night came, at about 8, I joined the crowds of people walking through the streets towards the Bonfire, guided by the leaping sparks visible over the roofs of the houses and the loud traditional music that always included the clarinet, which seemed to reach every corner of the village. Children wore costumes, some adults too; many wore funny hats, noses or wigs. Some men wore plastic breasts, while one man in a gorilla suit also wore a meter long plastic penis. He was leaning casually against a car, shouting out traditional greetings to passersby. There was excitement in the air - 'party time'.*

*We all climbed the hill, the crowds getting thicker, and passed two stalls. One was selling candy floss and sugared nuts, the other cans of foam spray, tightly rolled streamers to throw, huge brightly coloured hammers that squeaked loudly when you hit something, plastic hooters and bags of coloured confetti. A few people stopped to buy, while the rest of us moved on and reached what was usually a large open space – flanked by houses on three sides and the church at a higher level on the fourth. The first thing we saw was the fire – sparks shooting in the air as the pounári flamed easily. When the wind blew we were enveloped in a steady shower of sparks. Through the smoke and flames I could see, on the far side of the square, huge piles of pounári, from which some men kept pulling more branches to keep the flames leaping high. At the same time from a small stage to one side of the fire, the wailing pitch of the clarinet, the singing and the steady thumping of the támbouro (big drum), blasted through my ears and down to my stomach, with the rhythmic beat of the Carnival songs. There was a sea of movement, shouting, laughter, music, the sudden spray of sparks, the smell of the burning wood, an all enveloping excitement.*

*The whole area was packed with people, some 'foreigners', but mainly locals, some returning from Athens for the holiday weekend. There was a constant flow of movement, groups breaking up and reforming, children running back and forth, there were greetings called, and hugs and kissing. The balloon-sellers moved purposefully through the crowd towards the still 'balloon-less' child, their huge bunches of inflated balloons in the shape of all the most popular cartoon characters. Spongebob Squarepants knocked into my face as a balloon-seller moved past me.*

*The crowd around the fire was about five people deep, forming a large circle of spectators. A small group had already started dancing to one side, and then the Mayor took the lead in the first dance around the whole fire. A long chain of 30 or 40 men, women and children aged 2 to at least 80, holding each other's shoulders and facing the fire, danced an ongoing slow dance. After a short time the Mayor dropped out and the lead was taken up by someone else. The music did not stop but just led seamlessly from one dance to the next for the next five or six hours, and people dropped in and out of the dancing chain as they chose.*

*Next to the stage a small building, usually a storage shed, was being used as a kitchen, with a roped-off area around it. Long trestle tables were laid out in front of it and members of the Women's Association were preparing individual plates of food that they handed out to those who passed by. To the back of the square were tables with boxes of wine and paper cups, which people served for themselves. A large group of the older men were standing in this area that was slightly raised and they could look over the heads of the crowd towards the fire and the dancing.*

*Then the music changed to a slightly faster rhythm, the Vláhikos gámos (Vlach wedding) had arrived. A large group of young people entered the dancing circle. The lead was taken by the bride (a tall man with a beard in a wedding gown and veil) and her poor wilting groom (a small woman dressed in morning suit). They were followed by the parents of the bride and groom and guests – the father of the bride keeping order with a shepherd's crook. There were 20 to 30 of them altogether, all dressed in costumes of all kinds. Their arrival was greeted with enthusiasm and the party was definitely livening up. The bride threw 'her' bouquet into the crowd and everyone cheered.*

*Fireworks were then set off and the crowd was lightly powdered with the falling ash. The dancing and music continued, the wine flowed, people continued to come and go. A small child slept on her father's shoulder.*

*Slowly as the night carried on, people started to leave. By one in the morning the crowd was thinning, although some people would carry on dancing until three or four. But for most it was home for a few hours sleep before the carnival parade with more music, dancing and feasting the next day. Reports of the success of the event filled the local newspaper and blogs.*

The Bonfire was seen to be a night of *ksefántoma* (living it up) for the whole town. It had been held in its current form for many years, and was a stated residue of Dionysion worship for which the town was a centre from ancient times to about the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>5</sup>. The celebrations were linked to ancient ceremonies in honour of the God Dionysius, God of the vineyard, wine, and drunkenness, but also, in a deeper sense, God of medicine, divination and music. A famous oracle of the god had been located in the town, and the associated Dionysian orgies were held in the area, usually in the depths of winter. The main focus of these was, by torchlight, with fire and through drum beating and wine, to enter a state of ecstasy in which one entered a communication with the God (E., 1978).

This idea of transformation, common in rituals (Mattingly, 1998), was evident in the aim of the *ksefántoma*. Throughout the year, people frequently stated that it was important and necessary *na ksepáseis* (to break out), and *na glentás* (to revel), in order to regain balance of the self. The liminal state in traditional rituals has been described to be often accompanied by ambiguous or monstrous images (Turner, 1986), and at the Bonfire this was seen in the gender reversals, the sexual symbols and the words of the songs, that combined to create a moment of chaos in which usual structures were suspended before moving on to the next phase of the yearly calendar, which was Lent.

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<sup>5</sup> During the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Centuries A.D. Christian churches were gradually built throughout the area, however worship to Dionysus and other gods was slow to die out. In 380 AD the Roman Emperor forbade sacrifices to the gods, but it was not until 529 A.D. that the Emperor Justin finally ordered all temples to be closed, forbade priests to make sacrifices and banned the teaching of Greek philosophy (E. 1978).



As well as this unique transformation of the usual, the accepted and the moral that was a feature of the Bonfire, present were the elements associated with usual celebration in the town – music, dancing, wine and food, together with the *kéfi* reached in the company of others. One's place in the social fabric was reconfirmed, perhaps physically embodied in the ongoing linked chain of the dancing. The dances and music at such community events were traditional to the region. Children learnt the dances from their first steps and participation in such events, while the Folk Law Associations dancing classes ensured that the 'correct' steps and more complicated and less well known dances were retained in the communal memory. Even in the night clubs and private parties, where Western music was played and danced to for part of the evening, the entertainment always culminated in dancing to traditional Greek songs, essential to *kéfi*.

In the town, numerous celebrations were held throughout the year, Easter celebrations with their intensely religious underpinnings, combining mourning and resurrection, and taking place during the rebirth of spring, was the major event of the year, bringing family, neighbourhood and town together through various events over the week's celebrations. Other events were commemorative, for example of Independence Day or Oxi Day (the day Greece entered the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War), and were celebrated with processions, the laying of wreaths at the war memorial and patriotic speeches.

These events punctuated the ongoing flow of everyday life, demanding change, creativity, innovation, cooperation and opportunities for heightened or altered mood. They balanced the mundane with the unusual, the individual and familial with the collective. The preparation of these events required considerable cooperation between the various organisations of the town and work by individuals. Usually the town council coordinated the event while other groups, such as the Women's Association making the food for the Bonfire, participated in part of the preparations. Not all individuals participated in the same way, each person taking part as they wished, needed, or were able to do. However, together the coordinated occupation of individuals combined to produce a community celebration.

All these events offered the opportunity for interdependent participation in occupation and for a sense of community, sharing and cooperation to be (re)-established

(Christiansen & Townsend, 2011). The town reaffirmed their identity through such community events (Myerhoff, 1986), and the townspeople were always proud of the success of the various celebrations, regarding the Bonfire talking of how they had *ksefantónoun* ('painted the town red').

## **Reflections on Maintaining the Social Fabric**

Occupation maintaining the social fabric took multiple forms from informal encounters in public places, to involvement in local organisations and local government, to participation in community celebrations. Such social occupation is relevant to discussions of participation, social inclusion and citizenship, and can be seen to support discussions of the importance of occupation as a mechanism for the development and growth of society (Wilcock, 2006), discussed here as a strong social fabric.

In occupational therapy and occupational science most of the few studies of social occupation have focused on groups orientated towards specific occupations, for example Jacob, Guptill & Sumsion's (2009) study of a university choir, or on the way specific occupations may build a community and interdependence (Asaba, 2008; Bratun & Asaba, 2008). However, in these studies community is used to refer to a group of people sharing similar interests rather than from a specific geographic location and fit with the theoretical literature that has largely restricted the discussion of social occupation to that occurring in face to face situations between two or more individuals (e.g. Eakman, 2007; Lawlor, 2003; Zemke & Clark, 1996a).

While face to face interaction formed part of the social occupation observed in the town, the impact of such interaction extended beyond the immediate participants, while certain occupations, such as the Bonfire, involved several thousand people. Fogelberg & Frauworth (2010) presented an initial discussion of the need to study occupation at levels other than that of the individual and outlined an occupational systems framework to explore distributed occupation at and between the levels of individual, group, community and population levels. Fox and Dickie (2010), exploring the processes of

participation, although focusing on a particular community theatre group rather than a broader community, identified the existence of complex relationships of both hierarchy and heterarchy that needed to be negotiated. Certainly in the town a multi-dimensional structure was also evident. Occupation was informal (daily encounters), formal (participation in Associations) and occasionally celebratory, but also at the micro level of moment-to-moment tactics and the macro level of organisation of occupational patterns. Co-occupation, for example the exchange of food by two women, contributed to the maintenance of the neighbourhood as a whole, while the individual woman cooking a cheese pie in her kitchen contributed to the overall success of the Bonfire. Once again it may be seen how a transactional perspective enables all these forms to be understood as co-constitutive, but also how occupation understood as a process through time, enables on-going exchange, the building of trust within groups, the exchange of knowledge and skills, combining to maintain the social fabric. The term social fabric rather than community was used in this study, to emphasis the multi-layered and diverse nature of the processes, involving all elements of the situation and not only people.

While participation in specific community groups, e.g. choir, gym, further education, and creative groups, is common in the urban centres of the industrialised West, it is not clear how usual such groups are throughout the world. Additionally the importance of the more informal encounters, participation in the neighbourhood and in the organisation of associations discussed here for the development of social capital, a sense of community and the enactment of citizenship, may be useful to consider in respect to communities elsewhere.

There is an increasing focus within occupational therapy of the importance of community development (Galheigo, 2011; Pollard, Sakellariou, & Kronenberg, 2010; Whiteford, 2003). Approaches call for the empowerment of communities by reinstating local control and decision making (Wilcock, 2006) and include structural participation (Galheigo, 2011), suggesting the importance of participation in the local organisations and associations observed in the town. However, how occupation works to maintain or develop the social fabric as discussed in this chapter, has been largely unexplored. This may be important as it indicates the multiple ways that people may participate in the social fabric, expanding possibilities for inclusion beyond a problematic focus on

participation in work (Periera & Whiteford, 2013). The importance of the neighbourhood has been suggested as being particularly important for more vulnerable and isolated people (Gowman, 1999). However, as a place it is usually understood to be a much bigger area than the small and immediate five or six houses described in this study, and this may be an important area for further exploration. This study suggests the need to explore the way social groups restrict opportunities for participation in occupation amongst certain members of their populations (e.g. some women in this town), or restrict their opportunities to develop their occupational potential, through the ongoing re-establishment of traditional values and roles. This is important in countries such as Greece where the legal system and public policy to support opportunities for capabilities (Nussbaum, 2011) are largely in place but where local communities would seem to have a role in preserving conditions of occupational deprivation (Whiteford, 2000, 2011), for example. This proposal aligns with a recent discussion that suggests the importance of recognising the intentional stance of communities that include and exclude (Ramugondo & Kronenberg, 2013). Greater understanding and awareness of how occupation maintains the social fabric and also enables change would seem to be particularly important.

This exploration of the social fabric would also suggest the importance of occupation for citizenship. Citizenship is rarely discussed in relation to occupation although it is undoubtedly a tacit part of the understanding of participation and occupational engagement, as ongoing work is beginning to explore (ENOTHE Citizenship Working Group, 2013). In the town much of the occupation maintaining the social fabric may be considered occupation addressing the role of the citizen. For example, informal encounters were deliberately structured to support businesses, neighbours and *gnostoi*, while also providing opportunities for ongoing discussion regarding local and national politics. Participation in the associations was perhaps most clearly related to the maintenance of the town as a working organisation, while even the events of the Bonfire required a considerable individual and group contribution from numerous citizens.

Although this small town with a largely stable population cannot be compared to the large urban centres of the industrialised world, it offers an interesting insight into the multiple forms of interdependent occupation that emerge in such a situation.

Occupation here cannot only be considered from the perspective of the individual acting in a social situation, but as a form of inter-related and inter-dependent actions, or transactions, that contribute to the construction of the social fabric. Occupation in the form of informal encounters, neighbourhood exchanges, hanging out and having a coffee were important in the construction and maintenance of social networks, as people ensured they were part of the social flow and engaged in the exchange of news, skills and goods, within a fairly stable circle of known people that ensured trust. A sense of ownership of public places was important in this process and enabled by the limited administrative regulation of spatial and temporal forms, which opened these places to the possibility of being shaped by the people of the town through their occupation. Participation in civil society was perhaps enabled by the historical absence of a ruling class which facilitated families to be active in the public sphere. Perhaps with less altruism than frequently attributed to participation in voluntary work (Christiansen & Townsend, 2011) there was however a pragmatic understanding of the necessity and advantages of community organisations and associations. It has been noted how industrial society has lost many of the ritualistic aspects of daily life (do Rozario, 1994), and it was seen how the ritual celebratory occupations for the whole community reinforced identification with the town, provided opportunities for relaxation and fun with a change from the routines of everyday life, while providing opportunities for creativity, problem solving, organisation and other skills according to the interests, skills and needs of each person.

The social fabric was understood to be a complex construction that enabled the ongoing functioning of the town as a whole, both practically but also through enabling a sense of community and belonging. Occupation was the primary process that preserved, maintained and developed the social fabric.

This chapter developed the third and final plot of occupation in the town. Maintaining the self-in-the-world, the family and the social fabric were developed as the central plots of narrative of occupation in the town. Within the ongoing flow of occupation these provided direction, ends-in-view, a tacit knowledge of what was usual, but also important, to maintain. This chapter also concludes the presentation of the findings of this study. The findings have been presented in the form of a narrative of occupation in the town, which developed the nature of the action, the setting and three plots. In the

following and final chapter of this thesis, these findings will be reviewed as I present the conclusions that can be drawn from this study.

## **Chapter 9: Drawing Conclusions**

This study aimed to explore occupation in the town of Melissa in Greece, including the influence of social, spatial and temporal aspects on occupation, the nature of occupation (who did what, where, when, how and why), and links to health, and to discuss these in relation to existing conceptualisations in the literature. In this final chapter I return to these questions to review the findings and to consider the implications of these for occupational therapy and occupational science research, education and practice, while also considering the limitations of this study. This thesis is completed with some final concluding remarks and a short post-script written following a visit to the town in May 2013.

### **Considering the Findings**

The last thirty years have seen the development of theory, research and practice focusing on occupation. This study, while based in this development, emerged from two main concerns in relation to it. The first was a concern that occupation as described in much of the English language literature, demonstrated specificity to the context in which occupational therapy had emerged as a profession at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This potentially had considerable implications, particularly in regards to the foundational links of occupation to health which were being again explored and re-established both in occupational therapy and occupational science, with expanded understandings of both health and occupation (Hocking, 2013; Stadnyk et al., 2011; Whiteford et al., 2000; Wilcock, 2006). The second concern was that despite the expansion of occupational therapy throughout most of the world, and the increasing interest in the study of occupation through the discipline of occupational science, there

have been relatively few studies of occupation conducted outside the English speaking countries of the industrialised world, and more specifically none have been conducted in Greece. These were the conditions that led to the development of this study, which utilised ethnographic methodology to explore occupation in the town over a period of 30 months.

In considering occupation as I came to understand it in this town I will discuss three main findings, or rather groups of findings. The first are regarding the nature of occupation itself, which I have discussed within a transactional perspective and which develop understanding of the core of occupation as a form of action and the relationship between the individual, occupation and context. The second group of findings relate to the actual doing of everyday life and what the people of the town, through occupation, are working to maintain, achieve and develop as a shared understanding of what is usual. Finally I will discuss occupation in relation to health as I came to understand it in the town.

### **The nature of occupation.**

Occupation as understood in this town moved away from a conceptualisation of occupation as named chunks of activity (Clark et al., 1991) with specific characteristics, towards an understanding of occupation as “all the things that people, need, want or have to do” (Wilcock, 2006, p. xiv) and as largely the ordinary, unremarkable ongoing doing of the everyday (Erlandsson, 2013). As an ongoing, emergent and flexible flow (Kantartzis et al., 2012), occupation came to be understood not as the doings of an active agent on or in the external context, but as a transactional process. Understanding occupation as a transactional process, underpinned by the transactional theory of John Dewey (1922/2007, 1958; Dewey & Bentley, 1949), includes a number of key aspects.

Firstly, the person and the context are understood to be part of one whole, the multiple elements of which are contingent and constantly changing. Weather conditions, social institutions, physical location and built places and the people living within these are part of one whole situation (Dewey & Bentley, 1949). All elements influence all other elements, outside any hierarchy and each with a significance that is also constantly



changing. Occupation is a key transactional process that works to maintain the harmony or balance between these multiple elements. Occupation at any one time emerges, or is 'because of', any number of these contingent elements. Therefore, it is not possible to say that an individual is the primary author of his or her occupation. However, within the ongoing flow of everyday living, choices emerge and judgements are made about what is right or wrong, better or worse and occupation works to maintain the overall daily life which is perceived to be usual, while within that people may have more specific ends-in-view (Dewey, 2007). This transactional perspective also challenges what has been described as a persistent dichotomy between individualism and collectivism in the literature (Ramugondo & Kronenberg, 2013), by placing the individual, the family and the social in an ongoing transactional relationship.

Another important aspect is that when understanding occupation as an ongoing process it becomes difficult to define spatial and temporal boundaries around it. Although at times it may appear that the individual is engaged in a specific named activity, to regard this as a bounded whole, obscures the ongoing complexity of occupation within the situation. This complexity relates to both an understanding of the multiple factors over time that led to the particular moment of doing, but also that naming a particular chunk of doing in a specific way, for example, 'shopping' obscures the multidimensionality of what is happening.

A further aspect is that occupation, as a transactional process that coordinates the multiple elements of the situation, is necessarily multi-dimensional and has to do with change. Occupation is the means by which change is both managed and realised. This may be the change of major life events, for example, a married couple building their own home and moving out from living with their parents, or a young adult moving to Athens to attend higher education. The change may be less significant, taking place within the expected flow of daily life, for example the ripening olives in late autumn leads to the whole family gathering to collect olives, while on Sundays when most shops are shut and businesses closed, a coffee in the square with family and friends becomes possible. Change may also be more in the form of an on-going tweaking of the situation, for example, answering a phone call, accepting an offered *glukó* (sweet) on someone's name day, or running inside to stay dry in a sudden downpour. These examples of occupation managing change in the situation appear as isolated events

but are in fact incorporated into an ongoing flow of successive and ongoing change. A similar perspective in moving away from a one-level analysis of occupation has been presented in the Value and Meaning in Occupations Model (Erlandsson, 2013; Persson et al., 2001), which, however emphasises occupation as it relates to different periods of time for the individual (life-course, everyday patterns and specific occupations). Here I wish to emphasise that occupation as a process occurs at multiple levels of significance, of time, and in terms of a focus on person, family or community, and the significance of change may relate to any of these dimensions.

A further important aspect related to this ongoing change of all elements of the situation, is that occupation was therefore of central importance in maintaining, developing, frustrating or threatening the harmony or balance of the situation. The importance of harmony or balance can be particularly seen over extended periods of time, for example, from a historical perspective it was essential to survival that people and town could continue to be a situation as a whole that maintained health and permitted sufficient flourishing to enable essential ongoing occupation. In the more immediate situation of the time I spent in the town, maintaining balance was also important, as illustrated by the three plots around which the narrative was developed. This had a sense of maintaining things largely as they were, a resemblance to the fictional statement of the Leopard, referring to Sicily, "things must change in order that they can stay the same" (di Lampedusa, 2007). While maintaining balance was an overarching theme there were people who were actively engaged in more dynamic change, for example, Martha's determination to open a small shop and Michaelis' involvement in the town council. However, there were also those whose situations did not permit them the occupation that would enable harmony or balance, for example, those living in conditions of considerable occupational deprivation (Whiteford, 2000) and experiencing anxiety and depression as a result.

Balance was not focused directly on the individual, for example in the sense of a person's time-regulated balance between work and leisure over the course of the day, but was primarily focused on the situation as a whole. It did not always directly involve people, for example the balance between the required weather conditions and the growth of crops was primarily a balance of these two elements of the situation, although the farmers might choose to intervene in that relationship with watering

systems and fertilisers. Balance, like occupation occurred at multiple levels and dimensions. It included the balance of needs experienced by the individual and demands of the context, the balance of autonomy and relationships, the balance of self in the natural, built and spiritual worlds and the balance of the community with the family and with the individual. Balance was also moment by moment but also through time. This understanding of balance within the situation as a whole, whether at a macro or personal level, reflects the ideas of Ann Wilcock and the human need for occupation (Wilcock, 1993), together with ideas from health ecology (Honari, 1999).

### **The doing of occupation.**

The second group of findings that I wish to discuss are those that relate to the actual doing of everyday life in the town. I had asked the question, who does what, where, when, how and why, and in developing the narrative of occupation in the town I have endeavoured to explore and problematise this question, particularly through the three plots: maintaining the self-in-the-world, maintaining the family, and maintaining the social fabric. There are a number of aspects which are important to consider, including, the essentially social nature of occupation, ideas around categories of occupation, and the importance of the social, spatial and temporal arrangements on occupation.

My understanding of the transactional nature of occupation developed in part from the intensely social occupation that I observed and participated in, and which has been discussed throughout the findings. The plots located occupation predominantly in the world of social doing and social groups, from the immediate family to the community as a whole, moving away from a focus on the doings of the individual for the individual. Occupation in the town was essentially social; people did with, for and because of, other people, with family occupation perhaps the primary example.

Categorising named types of occupation has always been important to its conceptualisation, and this study has critiqued such naming of bounded activity. However, during the study there did emerge an understanding of a division between two types of doing, a division based primarily on where the control of the characteristics and nature of the particular doing was located. One type of doing was those things that had to be done, usually called *dhouleiés*, and the other was the ongoing occupation of

which the person primarily had control. *Dhouleiés* was used as a term for all daily tasks including paid and unpaid work, household tasks, paying bills and other administrative tasks, and even buying a gift for someone's *yiortí* if this was felt to be an obligation rather than personal choice. They related to both individual tasks and those done for others, that is, they were important for maintaining the self, the family and the social fabric. Characteristic was that these were things that had to be done and where the individual had to fit their self to an external framework. The external framework might relate to a particular place or time, the pace or type of work that had to be done, or the needs of others (e.g. hungry children). Apart from *dhouleiés* was the ongoing flow of occupation where the person was living primarily according to the needs of their self, and in accordance with their own rhythms. One might choose to rest, watch television, pick *xórta*, go to the square for a coffee and see one's *paréa*, or have a bike ride, but in these occupations there was a sense of people maintaining their self in all its complexity, including fulfilling needs and living with one's soul. The division between *dhouleiés* and the ongoing flow of occupation was not absolute, for example, an obligation such as attending a family member's *yiortí* (name day celebration) contained elements of both. Both *dhouleiés* and doing according to one's internal needs were understood to be essential to daily life and the importance of the balance between them was also recognised.

The transactional perspective of occupation which has underpinned the discussion throughout this thesis, demonstrates the foundational importance of the social, spatial and temporal aspects of the situational whole on occupation. The transactional perspective moves beyond a focus on the individual influenced by contextual factors, and in understanding occupation within this town the particular characteristics of Melissa and their influence on occupation need to be emphasised. They provide a powerful illustration of the impact of these factors, supporting a need for a critical approach to occupation (Pollard & Sakellariou, 2012b; Whiteford & Hocking, 2012). This was a town where people knew, or knew of, each other and other families through both stories and experiences. People were brought up in tight family groups often in the family home, in familiar neighbourhoods, and as a result one belonged (Wilcock 2006) from before one was born. The strong sense of belonging and social connection was enabled by the largely stable population, but threatened by the economic climate that continued to require young people to leave the town for work. The geographical

location and the climate invaded every aspect of daily life, providing ongoing sensory and physical experiences as well as demands for specific occupation and ongoing change. The economic structures in the town and particularly that the majority of people were self-employed and the absence of privatised large-scale recreational facilities, permitted self-control, creativity and decision-making on a day to day basis. The power of the individual/family was facilitated by the historical absence of a local ruling class, ongoing small scale private ownership of land and businesses, participation in local organisations and administration with a reliance on local support, entailing the development of webs of influence with a resulting fairly equitable distribution of status between the people of the town. It may be suggested that occupation as process that balanced the elements of the total situation was recognisable and coherent for many people of the town, avoiding the occupational alienation (Stadnyk et al., 2011) that is increasingly discussed as emerging in fast-paced urban areas (Clark, 1997).

### **Occupation and health.**

A final aspect explored by this study is the perceived connection between occupation and health. This was explored in a number of ways in the study, both through a specific focus on how the people of the town promoted their health through their ongoing occupation, but also through the understanding that the overall direction of people's lives reflected what they considered important to do and to be. A healthy life incorporated ideas of good quality local food, exercise, sea baths, fresh mountain air, good relationships particularly in the family, an avoidance of worries and stress, and keeping balance. This understanding of health combined particular forms of activity with ways of being in the world. However, health can be seen to be also incorporated in the sense of the usual way to live. Care of the self and of one's family, maintaining the household and involvement in the social fabric of the town, were seen to be important and central aspects of ongoing occupation, and were what people worked to maintain. Successful involvement in these both enabled experiences of satisfaction, achievement and control, but also ongoing opportunities for the exercise of skills and capabilities and the satisfaction of needs, such as creativity and imagination, planning and decision making, emotional expression and self respect (Nussbaum, 2010; Wilcock 1993, 2006).

This discussion has presented a brief review of what I consider to be the main findings of this study, as they relate to understanding of occupation as a form of action, the characteristics of occupation in the town, and finally occupation and its relationship to health. Before discussing the implications of the findings for practice, education and research I will briefly consider the limitations of this study.

### **Limitations of the study.**

This study adds to the growing literature on occupation within occupational science and to the discussion of the universality of the concept of occupation but also to the diversity and the localised nature of its expression. The breadth of this study has limited the depth to which it could explore specific areas of occupation, and evident are the multiple directions for further exploration that this study identifies. However in the absence of any literature on occupation in Greece, it appeared necessary to initially explore through this study the concept of occupation itself. In the presentation of the findings I have aimed to maintain this focus on occupation itself, although undoubtedly when occupation is understood as all the doings of everyday life, this continues to be a very broad area for discussion.

A further limitation was my decision to locate this study in a small town. Undoubtedly the criticism will be made that the ongoing doings of people living in a small rural town bear little relation to the daily life of the almost half the population of Greece who live in urban areas. I have already discussed the reasoning which led to my decision to carry out the research in the town and in qualitative research of this kind discussion of the transferability of findings in a direct sense is not relevant. However, through the detailed presentation of the research process and the findings I anticipate that people situated in alternative settings will be able to use the study as a source for reflection and discussion.

Finally, there are also inevitable limitations due to myself as researcher. I have already discussed my own position within this study and I also recognise the limitations of my knowledge and experience as a researcher, and these have undoubtedly impacted on what I saw, experienced and understood. Throughout this thesis I have attempted to present clearly both the process and the findings of this research, in order that those

who may read it may be able to understand this as one reflection of the world of Melissa (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) and engage with it within their own world (Ricoeur, 1991).

## **The Implications of the Findings for Practice, Education and Research**

Following the review of the findings it is important to consider their implications for occupational science and occupational therapy research, practice and education. Although this study was carried out in a small town in Greece, I suggest that the understandings of occupation that emerged may be usefully discussed outside the boundaries of the town, while the implications and potential findings of this kind of study should also be considered.

This study was placed primarily within occupational science, aiming as it did to explore occupation as an important element of everyday life. I consider that the findings demonstrate the importance of research that explores occupation in communities and neighbourhoods throughout the world. The findings, while not incompatible with existing understandings of occupation, demonstrate tensions and areas that have not been sufficiently explored. These are not only at a descriptive level of cultural variations in daily doings but also relate to underpinning understandings of the world, of agency and structures, and of the place of occupation and understandings of action. This requires two parallel and interlinking directions to future scholarship. The first is the necessity for the development of local and situated explorations of occupation, throughout the world, together with recognition of the temporary and transient, relative, nature of these understandings. The second is the need for greater questioning of the hegemony of current understandings of occupation (Frank & Zemke, 2008). This is not only to do with the relatively limited extent of research on the nature of occupation itself, but, perhaps more importantly, the way in which current discussions of occupation in the English language literature are rarely situated. The result is an almost unquestioned acceptance of occupation throughout the world as a universal concept. Given that understandings of occupation guide the development and implementation of theoretical models underpinning occupational therapy practice, and the importance of

theories of occupational justice to understandings of health, the potential for the future development of occupational science and particularly occupational therapy is considerably undermined by such limited theoretical understandings of occupation. It would seem important that research not only investigates elements of the existing conceptualisation of occupation, but explores occupation as a whole and afresh in order offer a critical view on what is currently taken as known.

Beyond such exploration of the conceptualisation of occupation within understandings of the situated, diverse and transient nature of the contemporary world, this study also revealed a number of specific areas that would seem to be important for future research. One area is regarding the ongoing sociality of occupation in the town, including the importance of family occupation, informal encounters in public space and the maintenance of the social fabric. These have not been sufficiently explored in current discussions of individuals' occupation, which is the predominant focus of scholarship at this time (Kinsella, 2012). The intertwining of the collective, family and person, indicates possible shortcomings in current conceptual models of occupation which place the individual at core and the family and collective as part of the wider context or environment (e.g. Kielhofner, 2008; Law, 1996; Townsend, 1997a). When collective, family and person are understood to be part of a transactional relationship the limitations of such conceptualisations become obvious.

Another important area for further exploration is the power of occupation. This includes the power to shift the relationships between elements of the situation to enable ongoing balancing of self and world, not only through macro occupation over a period of time, but also on a moment by moment basis, for example, through the use of tactics. This power relates primarily to the power of occupation for the person, however power is also evident in the power of the social to preserve discriminatory practices, for example, gender roles or ageism. In the town these were preserved through the day to day practices that reinforced existing attitudes and prevented change. While reinforced by economic and other institutional factors, the power of the social was considerable. The power of the social or collective through occupation, with potentially both positive and negative effect, is an area that has only recently been explored in the literature (Ramugundo & Kronenberg, 2013). The ongoing individualism of occupational therapy practice with a concern for the health of the person, has led to limited attention to the



effect of the person's occupation on the wider context, and this would be a valuable area for further research.

This study also indicates the importance of research methods that focus on doing itself. Language has been an increasingly important focus of occupational research with life histories and life stories, phenomenological, narrative and discourse analysis methods (Frank & Polkinghorne, 2010). However, it is recognised that it is the unusual, the significant and the non-explainable which usually enters discourse, while much of what is mundane and practical remains tacit (Bruner, 1990). Exploring occupation as "all the things that people need, want or have to do" (Wilcock, 2006, p. xiv) entails exploring occupation in all of its possible dimensions and variety. This requires research methods such as the participant observation of this study, which can focus on the everyday and the unremarkable, for example as embodied action and as narrative-in-action (Alsaker et al., 2009; Josephsson, Asaba, Jonsson, & Alsaker, 2006).

Occupational science from its inception had a declared relationship with occupational therapy and an intention to develop knowledge of occupation that might inform occupational therapy practice (Zemke & Clark, 1996b). As occupational science develops an increasingly critical and reflexive approach to engaging with the occupational issues of society (Hocking & Whiteford, 2012), the borders between occupational science and occupational therapy become less distinct. In relation to this particular study, it emerged in part from the difficulties and confusions of discussing occupation with occupational therapy students. Therefore, although this was a study of occupation, and the findings are clearly related to exploring understandings of the concept of occupation, I also consider that the study has implications for occupational therapy practice and education.

Primarily this study adds to the ongoing discussion that places occupation and the occupational view of humans as the essential focus of occupational therapy practice (and thereby education) (Molineux, 2004). The understanding of occupation as process that coordinates the multiple elements of the situation in ongoing harmony or balance, places occupation as central to successful living. Occupation here is linked to a positive and dynamic view of health, situated in everyday life and focusing on people's potential. While occupational therapy practice has been described as largely focused

at “downstream secondary or tertiary health promotion roles” supporting individuals to deal with symptoms of chronic disease or injury (Scriven & Atwal, 2004, p. 426), there is a drive to move occupational therapy practice upstream and to focus on primary health promotion (Hocking, 2013; Scriven & Atwal, 2004; Wilcock, 2007), which the understanding of occupation which was developed in this study fully supports.

These findings also suggest a need to question certain aspects of occupational therapy theory as translated into practice, and these have been discussed throughout the findings. While what is relevant to practice will vary from situation to situation, I will highlight some key points. Primarily, a transactional perspective necessitates a questioning of the individual focus which underpins theoretical models and the idea of the individual as agent of their occupation (Kielhofner, 2008; Townsend & Polatajko, 2007). A critical consideration of the situation through time within which the person is living is essential, particularly given the largely tacit and taken-for-granted nature of much of daily life. Taking Venkatapuram’s (2011) understanding of health, occupation is not only an individual’s biological potential and behaviours, but also is the context.

In addition, the understanding of occupation as process and within a transactional perspective, brings to practice consideration of balance through time and at multiple levels, and a need to question the understanding of occupation as occupations (named, bounded and external to the individual) and check-list approaches to measuring people’s doing. This study also highlights the importance of the family and the social world of the individual as an integrated part of their daily doing and it seems important to consider to what degree these aspects are considered in practice.

In concluding these remarks on the implications of the study I wish to emphasise what I consider to be some key points regarding occupation and health and the relationship between them, which have been highlighted by this study.

This study has supported a transactional perspective of occupation as important in understanding the multiple elements that constitute people’s occupational lives. A similar multidimensional view is also characteristic of contemporary understandings of health. Both occupation and health cannot be considered from only, or even primarily, the perspective of the individual. If health is the capability to do and to be

(Venkatapuram, 2011), occupation is the expression of health as people do, be, become and belong (Wilcock, 2007). What is also important, and given more attention in theories of occupation than theories of health, is that through doing and being, people engage in an ongoing process of change, develop their capabilities, and thus a dynamic and positive ongoing cycle of change can be instigated.

In Melissa people maintained their self, their families and the social fabric of their day to day lives through their ongoing doing, harmonising or balancing the multiple elements of the situation. This was not a prescriptive process regarding quantity and type of specific, named activities, but was a flexible and dynamic process where the focus changed from individual to family to neighbour, from *dhouleiés* that needed to be done to the relaxation of a *café* or a *vólta*, from the mundane and the routine to community celebration and experiences of heightened emotions. This was an interweaving that resembles the developing discussion of patterns of occupation that influence health and well-being (Erlandsson, 2013; Moll et al., 2013).

This doing provided opportunities for connectedness and for belonging, and for experiences of *kéfi* (breaking out, release) and relaxation. Occupation also provided important opportunities for problem solving, innovation, choice, control, while most fundamentally, occupation also enabled survival, supporting both theories of occupational needs (Wilcock, 1993), and central human capabilities and health (Nussbaum, 2011; Venkatapuram, 2011). Health was both demonstrated by persons as they engaged in occupation, but was also supported and promoted by this doing. The importance of the ongoing flowing of everyday life and of occupation as process has not been sufficiently explored and promoted with the developing understandings of health and health justice. I therefore propose that a final implication of this study is that it supports the ongoing promotion of occupation as a key expression but also element of health.

This study aimed to explore occupation in a small Greek town. Over a period of 30 months I observed and participated in daily life in the town. I began the process questioning whether occupation was a universal concept and completed it understanding that occupation is central to our ongoing daily lives in the world, and that

occupation is both an expression of health, but also works to support and develop healthy daily lives.

## Post-Script: May 2013

*I returned to the town to celebrate Easter in May 2013. It was not the first time I had returned since completing the data collection, but as I was in the final stages of writing this thesis it was an opportunity to undertake a short review and particularly to reflect on the influence on the town of the ongoing financial crisis that has continued to have a major impact on the country as a whole. Unemployment figures in Greece had reached an all time high of 27% in January 2013, and a staggering 59% for young people (Eurostat, 2013).*

*In many ways the town had not changed – the mountain continued to tower over it, the fields were green with sprouting crops, and the gardens were a mass of early summer flowers. It looked, entering the town, like the same red roofed jumble of stone buildings that it had always been. However, in the town there were some changes. Most immediately noticeable for me was Mr. Nikos' closed shop, the metal shutters pulled down over the long windows. Shortly after completing the study he had finally decided to close it, having been unable to find a buyer and as it was making a steady loss. However, I was pleased to see him still looking fit and well and seemingly well adjusted to retirement. He was quick to tell me that the church where he had chanted for so many years would not be holding an Easter service this year. The hiring freeze for public servants enforced by the Troika<sup>6</sup> as part of the national economic reforms, included priests. The church was without a priest. For the first time I went to the Good Friday service at the Metropolis instead. It felt strange to walk in the procession by candlelight behind the Epitáphios (bier of Christ) through unknown streets. There was a murmur of similar feelings from the people around me, for many this was the first Easter for 40 or 50 years that they had not gone to their own church.*

*Another change was that Thanopoulos' taverna, on the lower main street, had closed about a year previously. It was said to be because of decreased business as people ate out less regularly, and I was told that other tavernas were now surviving on serving*

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<sup>6</sup> Troika is the name given to the European Union, the International Monetary Fund and the European Central Bank, who are the authorities working together to regulate Greek debt.

*souvlákia (traditionally considered a cheap snack food). The empty shop left by Thanopoulos' closing, had now been taken over by the bookshop, which had been located near Mr. Nikos' shop on the steep incline of the old main street. This seemed to be another step in the shift of the commercial centre from the upper parts of the town to around the lower square. There was now only one shop remaining on the top half of the old main street. A flower shop had also opened on the lower road, adding to this feeling that the commercial centre was expanding along the lower streets. I was surprised to see this new flower shop as there were now three in the town, and it was difficult to see how all three would have sufficient business. I was pleased to see that Martha had opened her small shop and it seemed to be doing well, with people coming and going throughout the day.*

*Over the days, other changes emerged. The recycling programme had been stopped and the rubbish bins were emptied much less regularly, as the budget of the municipality was still in doubt. Michaelis had a new position on the Town Council but was still there, "what can I do", he asked rhetorically, "I have made a commitment".*

*The main change that I had anticipated to find regarding the farmers had not taken place. The farming subsidies, due to stop in 2013, had been extended until 2017. Two or three more fields have been given over to solar panels as a result of the incentives offered to farmers by the government. However, over the Easter period tax changes were announced, including a considerable rise in tax payable on the profits of the solar panel farms, a reversal of the stated policy, and another blow to faith in the administration.*

*On a day to day basis little seemed to have changed. On Easter Sunday the neighbourhoods still got together to cook their lambs and during the day the squares were full of families, friends and paréas sitting together for a café. Occupation continued as a process as I had understood it. Ongoing change was taking place: Mr. Nikos was adjusting to a day without going to his shop, school supplies were now available at the corner of the main street; you had to be careful not to put out too much rubbish or the bins overflowed, and so on. Self-awareness had increased as people commented on what oi ksénoi (foreigners) would think of Greece's financial crises, as they looked at the overflowing square with people 'having a kafé'. It seems unfortunate*

*that as industrialised nations struggle to re-create the neighbourhood and conditions for inclusion (Gowman, 1999), the same conditions were perceived to be under threat in the town. At the same time the importance of being part of the social fabric, to do family occupation and to take care of ones self were ongoing, although in many cases with a tighter budget and more anxiety about the future.*

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## ***Appendix A***

### ***Transliteration and Glossary of Greek Terms***

## Transliteration and Glossary of Greek terms

The terms presented here are those for which there is not a word in English which gives the same meaning or has the same conceptual structure. They are those words which are used throughout the text in their Greek form, presented in italics. The explanation of the words is based on dictionary definitions (particularly the Greek version of the Free Dictionary – [el.thefreedictionary.com](http://el.thefreedictionary.com)) and my own understandings of how these words were being used by the people of the town.

In the transliteration of Greek words I have not attempted to keep the complexities of Greek orthography, but following Heather Paxon (2004) have tried to present words so that non-Greek speakers can pronounce them and Greek speakers will be able to recognise them. This means that that generally:

*dh* for  $\delta$  (pronounced like *th* in *the*)

*ks* for  $\xi$

*h* or *ch* for  $\chi$

and

*y* or *g* for  $\gamma$ , depending which was more appropriate

The accent mark is used to indicate emphasis

*Aghos*: Anxiety or stress. Considered a threat to health and to be avoided if possible. Life was generally considered to be more anxiety provoking than in the past and particularly city life.



*Agiasmós*: blessing – carried out by the one or two or the town's priests at the beginning of any public event, opening of a new business, beginning of the school year. Could also be arranged to be done privately in one's own home or for a new car.

*Agóna*: fight, race or struggle. Often used in relation to life, as in 'life is an agóna'. Understood both in the sense of it being a fight/struggle but also a race (competitive with others).

*Apóyevma*: the time in between the middle of the day and the evening, when the middle of the day, the *mesiméri*, finishes at about 17.00.

*Dhouleíá* (*pl. dhouleiés*): work; any task, job or something that needs to be done; also used in the sense of 'that's not my business'

*Dhrastiriótita*: activity (*general*)

*Ekdhílosi*: organised group event, e.g. a cultural event

*'Ennoia*: concern, disquiet. Usually used by parents when talking about their concern for their children

*Epitáphios*: symbolic bier of Christ, carried around the streets of the parish on Good Friday

*Ergo*: word used by Greek occupational therapists for occupation. In wider use, used to refer to large scale works e.g. construction or creative

*Frappé*: cold Nescafe coffee served shaken, almost a 'national' drink

*Frontistírion*: tuition centres. These tuition centres are virtually institutionalised centres for education, over and above daily schooling. The vast majority of teenagers will attend for extra tuition in most of the subjects they will take for university entrance examinations, younger children attending classes in their 'weak' subjects. Foreign languages are also taught in specialised frontistírion.

*Gluká*: literally means 'sweet' and used to refer to small sweets/deserts/wrapped cakes and chocolates. Often bought to offer people for your name day or to take as a gift when visiting someone's house. Differentiated from gateau and cake.

*Gnostós* (pl. *gnostoí*): someone who you know, and may imply some obligation

*Kafeneío*: usually used for the traditional coffee shop.

*Kalaboúri*: banter, teasing. An essential ingredient of a night out.

*Kathimerinótita*: everyday(ness). A frequently used noun referring to mundane everyday life

*Kefaloxóri*: head village – title used from the time of the Ottoman occupation

*Kéfi*: fun, cheer, conviviality. Subjective state one enters when having a good time, one 'comes to kefi'

*Kérasma*: treating, particularly of drinks at the *kafeneio* or *tavernas*

*Koumbáros/a*: Best man/woman (wedding sponsor). Also used for God parent. Special relationship entered into during church service of marriage or baptism

*Ksefántoma*: carousal, to live it up

*Ksénos*: foreigner or stranger, person who is not known in one's familiar environment

*Ksekoúrasí*: rest, relaxation. To become 'un – tired' = *ksé - kourasi*

*Ksespáo*: to externalise tension /relieve tensions – mental and physical. Also used for a sudden 'outbreak' of rain

*Melissótes*: People of the town of Melissa, used by the townspeople themselves to refer to those people belonging to the long-term established families of the town, with roots.

*Mésos*: means, to have a person (usually in a public position) who can help you get what you need, help with administrative procedures

*Mezé*: a small plate of appetizers. By law it is required that any alcoholic drink is served with some form of food and *mezé* is the most typical

*Na vgo*: to get out. Usually to get out of the house, to go out.

*Nífi*: bride and daughter-in-law

*Nistía*: fasting – used to refer to the periods of restricted diet established by the Church

*Noikokúris, noikokurá, noikokurió*: houseman, housewife, household. Traditionally the most important economic and social unit in Greece

*Nonós, noná*: Godfather, Godmother. Very important relationship with the child, may intervene in family for the child's benefit.

*Oikoyeneárhis*: the head of the family (male). Implies that a man has responsibilities, and if used to describe someone that they are serious and responsible.

*Palévoume*: we are fighting. Often used with the idea of life being a struggle (*agona*), people would respond with this when I asked how they were. Used in the sense of 'we are struggling on'.

*Paréa*: companions, gang – the group of people, often known for many years with whom one goes out, goes on holiday and for excursions. Essential to having a good time. Usually do not include family members.

*Patrída*: Fatherland. Important in nationalist campaigns and slogans

*Pelátis*: customer, often used to indicate a regular customer

*Perivóli*: market garden. May be large plot of land around the home, but also may be a part of the farming land. Used for growing produce for the home, and also poultry may be kept

*Psixí*: Soul. Commonly used term to describe when someone is doing something with the whole of their being.

*Salóni*: Formal lounge. Often only used on special occasions

*Sói*: ancestors and relations.

*Stéki*: place one usually goes to for coffee, to meet one's *paréa*

*Táma*: vow, promise. Usually made to a particular Saint or to the Virgin Mary, when particularly help was needed with some situation. In return a promise was made, which could be from lighting a candle in the church to making an annual trip to one of the major shrines in Greece

*To xorió*: the village. The town was always referred to as 'the village' by the inhabitants.

*Vasilópitta*: St. Vassilis Cake/New Year Cake. Cut ritually after midnight on New Year's Eve, one piece had a coin hidden in it which represented good fortune for the year ahead to the person who got it. Also cut by all Associations for their members in January.

*Vólta*: ride, walk or stroll. Can be on foot, or by bicycle, car, pony etc., alone or with company. There is no particular destination. Involves a sense of someone finding their self or regaining balance

*Yeitoniá, yeítona*: Neighbourhood, neighbour. The 5 or 6 houses in the immediate vicinity to one's own and the people who live in them. Often a relationship lasting a life-time including practical help and daily chat.

*Yiayía*: grandmother, also generic term used for an old woman

*Yiortí (pl. yiortés):* holiday, celebration, particular the Saint's day celebrations

*Xórta:* Greens. Variety of dandelion-type plants that grow wild in the fields and are collected (particularly after the Spring and Autumn rains) to eat boiled or in pies.

*Xoráfia:* Fields. Used to refer both generally by all to the large patchwork of fields that spread up and down the valley, but also by farming families to refer to their own fields

*Ypochréosi :* obligation. To have an obligation to someone, something to be paid back.



## ***Appendix B***

### ***Article***

Kantartzis, S., & Molineux, M. (2011). The influence of western society's construction of a healthy daily life on the conceptualisation of occupation. *Journal of Occupational Science*, 18(1), 62-80.





## ***Appendix C***

### ***Book Chapter***

Kantartzis, S., & Molineux, M. (2012). Understanding the discursive development of occupation: Historico-political perspectives. In G. Whiteford & C. Hocking (Eds.), *Occupational science. Society, inclusion, participation* (pp. 38-53). Oxford: Wiley Blackwell

## ***Appendix D***

### ***The People of the Town***

Appendix removed to preserve anonymity

## ***Appendix E***

### ***Book Chapter***

Kantartzis, S., Molineux, M., & Foster, S. (2012). Occupation in a Greek town: Flowing, emergent, flexible across time and space. In N. Pollard & D. Sakellariou (Eds.), *Politics of occupation-centred practice. Reflection on occupational engagement across cultures* (pp. 92-105). Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.



***Appendix F***

***Extract from Fieldnotes***

## Extract from Fieldnotes

200. Monday 7th February 2011

Another lovely sunny day and very cold. Go into village about 10. I don't have a particular plan in mind and no appointments.

There seem to be quite a lot of people on the streets as I park and cross the square. I walk up the hill and pop into Toula's office on my way up. She says she hasn't been out much over the weekend because Yiannis has been ill. I tell her about meeting the President from the Women's association and how we had talked about having coffee. She says she (the President) had just been in, leaving leaflets about an outing to the theatre in Mallia later in the month. Toula suggests we all have coffee on Wednesday, I say I not sure what time I will be leaving and she says she could manage tomorrow too, 7.30 after work, she could finish a bit early.

Go on up the street – both doors to Mr Nikos' shop is open but he is not there. I go out again and see him walking smartly up the street – amazed by his speed and agility considering his age. He is smartly dressed – dark coat, shirt and tie. He greets me and he tells me it is his *yiorti* (name day) so I wish him well. He has been to the church in the morning, and had chanted. He offers me a wrapped chocolate out of a box, I take it and put it in my bag, wishing him *xronia polla* (Many year – the ritual wish for one's name day). I tell him I will leave him to enjoy his day and will come by in the morning. He says yes because there are things that should come out of the paper and some mistakes, to which I say, of course, it is just the beginning [we had just started recording some of his life story]. He looks towards the door, someone was coming by to wish him well, so I leave quickly.

I go on up to the KAPI. Another man is there who I know, who also has his *yiorti* – there are a lot of men and women with this name in the village. When I go in just him and another man are there. I go up to him, shake his hand, and wish him *xronia polla*. Martha comes out from the back, she is dressed up – a dress and make up. I suddenly realize her daughter also has her *yiorti* and she has dressed 'for the occasion'. I kiss her and tell her '*na tin xaírese*' (traditional greeting to a family member of someone who has their *yiorti*, meaning approximately – rejoice in her). She tells me she went to the

church in the morning, she couldn't stay for the whole service because she has to open the KAPI. She serves the men their drinks, she tells them that '*den einai mono thriskeftiki yiorti alla ethniki yiorti episis* – (it is not just a religious holiday but a national one as well') – we are all a bit confused and she explains that it is her birthday – more wishes all round '*alla proto gia ti kori mou* – but first for my daughter' she says. She offers us all a wrapped chocolate/cake/biscuit from a box. They are from the cake shop on the bottom road.

I ask the men how come it is this name today – as it had also been celebrated about two weeks ago. They explain that they (in the town) celebrate on the Saints Day of a local saint with that name from Mallia.

The man who has his *yiorti* comes to pay and tells Martha that he will buy all the drinks for everyone until lunchtime. She asks about the evening and he says he may well pass by again and '*tha doume* – we will see'. He goes out but comes back later to play tavli (backgammon) with another man who has just arrived.

I ask Martha if she will do anything for her birthday but she says no because she is going to work again in the afternoon. Letta, who also has the gift and flower shop, has asked if she can work her shift, because with so many people with *yiortes* she needs to be working in her shop too. Martha says she doesn't mind – it's not as if they were going to do anything - now if her daughter was there it would be different.

Her leave has been approved for her trip to see her daughter and yesterday her son had come for the day to see her before she leaves on Friday. She had used Skype to show her daughter what clothes she had left behind so she could decide what she wanted her mother to take for her. She will meet up with her sister and niece in Athens on Friday before flying on Saturday. I ask if her husband will go to his family (mother/sister) to eat while she is away, but she says maybe to his sister once or twice, but his mother never did anything like that even when the children were small, so she isn't going to do it now.

An older man – who Martha has a teasing /joking relationship with, and who I had always thought of as being rather deaf has been singing softly. She tells him not to sing the church chants but to sing ordinary songs. I tell him he has a nice voice, and he says he has never smoked, so although his voice is not as it was when he was young it is still good. He had been to the service this morning and had chanted. He is standing and so we tell him to sit with us, he says if he is not interrupting us and we say of course not and he sits. He says he has always sung – when he was in the first class of grammar school they had gone on a trip up the mountain to the springs (*piyes*) with the teachers, by foot. After the teachers had eaten he said they had started to sing and dance. He says that they danced to the voice i.e. they had no instruments. One boy made an instrument with a comb and a piece of cigarette paper. There was one ‘yellow faced, sour teacher – taught ancient Greek’ he says ‘ who had said to me – you are no good at ancient Greek but your father should buy you a violin. And when my father had gone to the school he had told him and I had the violin. But my father was executed by the Germans and the violin has hung on the wall’. He tells us more about this – his father was down in the fields near the barns and the rebels had hidden weapons there. He is difficult to understand and I don’t follow the whole story – but the result is that his father is one of a group of men executed in 1944, he says he was 17-18 years old. He looks immensely sad. He says he was the oldest of three children.

Anyway he then worked in the fields and when he was 35 became a local policeman. He married but never had children, his wife has now died and he lives on his own. His brother however had children and one of them is a former mayor of the village. He has a house which he has ‘written to the children’ (i.e. his brother’s children). Martha comments ‘*eh vevaia – ti to thes* – of course, what would you want with it?’, and he says he also rents out the 50 stremma of land that he has (about 12 acres).

He has a woman who comes in once every couple of weeks to clean and do the laundry, but he does his own cooking ‘yesterday I fried a pork chop’ he tells us. He lives at the bottom end of the village but walks up to the KAPI as long as the weather is good – sometimes the road is a bit crooked, he says, but I make it (implying he isn’t all that steady on his feet). He then goes home and has his lunch. I ask how come he comes up to the KAPI and doesn’t go to one of the kafeneio at the bottom square – but



he says, with a grimace 'there's too much smoke, I can't..'. He says the doctor has told him that the walk he does to the KAPI is the best medicine for him, and Martha says '*nai, to thema einai na synexiseis orthios, molis kathesai den ksana sikonesai* – yes the thing is to keep upright (i.e. keep going), once you sit you never get up again'.

I ask him what he thinks is the secret of a good life and he replies (without thinking, straight of) 'na fas, na peis, na glentas, na tragoudas, kai to sex – to eat, to drink, to have a good time, to sing, and sex – slyly/shyly muttering the word sex. He then mentions friends as well as being important, before repeating the previous.

He then says he is going as he wants to buy some *glika* (sweets/cakes). His nephew has his *yiorti* and he will go 'although we had a fight yesterday'. We ask what it was about 'he was insisting I go and it is too much, a big fuss and I said I wouldn't'. Martha is shocked, asking 'so you won't go'. 'No, no', he says 'I will go, how can I not go, everyone will be asking, where is Barbar..., no, of course I will go'. [Barbar is a word used to refer to all older men, as a form of address]. He asks to see the *glika* that Martha had offered us all earlier so he can get the same. They are individually wrapped in gold and silver paper, different shapes, about the size of a biscuit, but some are rectangular and some round. They are usually chocolate inside – like individual cakes or sometimes various nuts coated in chocolate. Individually wrapped and an individual size they are ideal for your *yiorti* to offer to everyone – people can either take them with them or eat them out of the tin paper – you just need to provide napkins. And as the old man says – they don't go off so quickly, so if you get a lot they can keep. He gets up and we say goodbye.

The phone rings and Martha answers it. She indicates to me that we will go to sit outside so she can have a cigarette too. Rica is on her balcony. We call up to her and ask her if she has anyone who is celebrating and she says 'of course, my grandson', we say the traditional greetings. We ask if she will come down but she is cooking a cake for him – with apple on top, she doesn't know how it will turn out. Martha asks her what she will make for lunch, and she says she will buy some fish from the fish man when he passes by. Martha remembers that she has some small fish so she can have those. Rica, still standing on her balcony, asks Martha when she will be off on holiday

and who will open the KAPI – Martha says it is for the powers that be to decide, but Letta can. Rica reminds me about the Christmas cake recipe she has asked me for, and I tell her I will bring it the following day. After a short time I leave.

## ***Appendix G***

### ***Example of one Category from Data Analysis***

## What is done, what happens ~~What do people do?~~

(Categories are not mutually exclusive).

### **Activities for oneself**

Free time activities, things you do for yourself and that incorporate an element of choice. This includes: handicrafts (embroidery, cut lace work, lace making), going to the gym, watching football on TV, gardening, walking, collecting horta, buying 'silly' things, going to the church, going to the beach, playing music, cycling, thermal baths, playing the lottery, reading a book, and staying in the house in winter.

Some of these are done individually, but many with others, e.g. hunting, sitting doing embroidery with a neighbour, watching football on the TV at one of the bars (also included in activities with and for others).

Some of these activities are close to being *dhouleies* (jobs), but tend to show more choice than many *dhouleies* and so are included here. e.g. Martha makes Quince jam – this is a *dhouleia* needed for the house - but also is something a bit different, out of the ordinary. Lace making, gathering xorta are also similar to this. Older men who still work in the fields or *perivoli* (kitchen garden) combine this sense of doing something for themselves with something which is also a *dhouleia*.

Some activities are closer to entertainment – playing music, watching or playing football.

Some activities overlap with self-care e.g. getting your hair done, and wearing a brightly coloured top

### **Activities of self-care**

Activities done for oneself, mainly, but not exclusively; needs of the body.

Examples: having a cup of coffee, making a meal, having a shower, going to the doctor, having your hair done.

For men in particular, self care activities related to food take place in public places – most have their morning coffee either at work or at the *kafeneion* ('why would I have it at home – in order to have a fight?'). Single men or widowers go for lunch or their

evening meal to the tavern (most have a regular that they always eat at). They will rarely eat alone.

Self care activities also influenced by income – older men with better pension can afford to have help with housework. Women shop for clothes in Athens.

Also influenced by religious beliefs e.g. fasting.

Going to the doctor/dentist. Many doctors are only available in Mallia. Dentists – most people seem to go to a *gnostos* (known) either in the village or neighbouring ones (Care of other people is in the category *Dhouleies*)

### **Activities of and for the town**

These are the various events that take place in which the whole town may be involved (Events, Holy Days, National anniversaries are in another category).

Included are: annual events, anticipated in advance and with a range of related preparations, organisation and performance e.g. the bazaar and carnival. Also one off, or more rare and unpredictable events, for example – putting down new drains in most of the central streets, local and national elections, the filming of a TV programme, the hosting of one of the special Olympics team. There are also town meetings which may be called to discuss a situation that is relevant to all e.g. the changes in local administration.

Another type of 'town' activity are those events which affect in one way or another a number of people in the town e.g. a fire in the fields which brought out the fire planes, heavy snow, earthquake. They require various responses from many of the people of the town.

Three subcategories:

#### *Clubs, organisations and groups*

Including the folklore association's choir and dance groups (who may do public performances – see *ekdiloses*), the KAPI (day centre for the elderly), church bible group (circle), and a variety of clubs – hill walking, para 5, football, cars etc. These are publicly run or run as clubs with a board to run them (i.e. non-profit making). There is one private dance school that does gym classes for adults (women). There is also an association of people from Melissa in Athens – begun when people started to move to the city for work and studies, their role is to support the village (ethically and financially).

Finally in the summer daily trips to the beach are run by the coach company

#### *Street market*

Held every Thursday from about 07.00 to 10.30. Place for buying fresh fruit and vegetables mainly, though clothes, shoes, seedlings, kitchenware are also sold. Place for learning the news: 'as good as having a local newspaper for learning news'.

#### *Bazaar and Carnival*

Two secular events that important traditionally – bazaar to buy goods that not available regularly in town, and carnival as break in mid-winter. Now, carried on more as tradition, but town fills with returning townspeople for both events, and not widely advertised (i.e. are not primarily tourist attraction).

Bazaar - annual event held on the same five days in September each year. In the past animals were also sold, now kitchenware, clothes and shoes, household goods, CDs and DVDs, gifts, jewelry. Large number of food stands serving barbequed meat.

Carnival – held for four weeks prior to Lent, culminating in variety of events on final weekend.

#### **Activities with and for others**

These are more small scale and informal activities than the Activities of and for the Town, but may be related (e.g. related to clubs and associations). Like the Activities for oneself they do not have the compulsory quality of *dhouleies* (jobs), although they may have some obligations. They have a wide range including:

Socialising: e.g. playing backgammon or cards, having friends to one's house, (also linked to category *vgaino* – going out: eating out, having a coffee with a friend or one's *parea*.)

Maintaining relationships and caring for others on a day-to-day basis: e.g. ringing one's mother or children to see how they are. These may be complex activities that emerge because of living so closely with someone (i.e. one mother moved out when she realized she was not welcome to live at her daughter and son-in-law's house)

Doing things with and for local associations (holding voluntary positions)

Going on holiday with friends or family

Doing things together with others e.g. going to the beach, hunting, going to festivals or events at neighbouring villages

### **Actions expressing disagreement**

This includes the various demonstrations and strikes held at town or professional level (e.g. the pharmacists), but also fights and disagreements between individuals. Also acts of defiance such as not eating at the shop you do not like, and not standing up for the priest's blessing. Verbal disagreements are quite common and are talked about.

### **Advertising events**

All the various events are advertised through posters put up on shop windows, through megaphone announcements, and for the past 18 months through an electronic notice board in the middle of the bottom square. For some time, and intermittently, there was a local newspaper. Local blogs and websites tend to report on events rather than advertise them.

### **Dhouleia, paid work**

Dhouleia is split into two categories - one is for paid work and one is for all the other things people have to do that they call dhouleies (jobs/works) also. Traditionally there was little difference between the work in agriculture, the bread made at home, the clothes washed etc. All just jobs that needed to be done for survival and basic care of self and others. However, now some people are employees and therefore receiving a salary, so this section refers to those activities for which the person receives money, and the next to those activities for which the benefit is in kind, or for others.

Sometimes this division is misleading e.g. farmers may grow crops for themselves and for sale, or collect horta while they are in their fields. In addition, these categories overlap depending if I am noting the activity from the point of view of the customer or the shopkeeper/employee.

Paid work in the town includes farming and services (bank employees, public services) – these were traditionally the two main groups in the town, together with shop keepers. There are also four priests whose salaries are paid by the government. The least desirable jobs – cleaning, odd jobs in the gardens and homes, work in the fields - are done mainly by low-paid immigrants.

### **Dhouleies, work** (jobs in home and outside, for oneself and other people)

These include almost anything done that is not paid work. Some things, like gardening, are at times Activities for Oneself – something enjoyed doing, however with a low mood it becomes just a job to be done. Locus of control with dhouleies is experienced to be outside of the person. Some of the civil servants also maintained their fields - some on a large scale and so became a second paid job, others did it for the produce for themselves and their families. Many had gender divisions (housework was done by women). Dhouleies were the vast range of things that just ‘need to be done’ – little choice or decision-making required. Done because always done, need to be done, part of life. A strong undercurrent in the ongoing flow of daily life. Include:

Seasonal tasks - pruning, cleaning carpets, collecting horta, cutting dead grass, collecting olives

Housework

Related to going out/ yiortes, considered douleies because they had to be done – i.e. buying a gift for someone’s yiorti.

Caring for children, grandchildren and older relatives.

Subcategory:

#### *Institutional obligations*

e.g. paying bills, getting pension, getting child and disability allowances, paying insurance contributions, renewing a driving licence. Many of these are time consuming and the person may need to go to Mallia for some papers, and even to Athens to the head offices for others. Many of the examples refer to delays, bureaucracy, using gnostous (known people) to help sort it out.

Another institutional obligation is the compulsory army service (at present for 9 months) that all men must do.

Also arranging for inheritance, writing wills, transferring property to children

Included here are also incidences of people ‘fiddling’ the system – told as stories or examples rather than direct experience or involvement

### **Ekdiloses, Yiortes, Ethniko epeteio (Events, Holy Days, National anniversaries)**



Yiortes: religious events or holy days – Easter, Xmas, 15th August and various saints days celebrated by the village, especially the town's own saints day.

Ekdiloses (events): such as car rallies, mountain running and other competitions, blessing/opening of statues and offices and the bi-annual Bread Festival.

Ethnika epeteia (national anniversaries): the national holidays of 25th March (Independence Day) and 28th October (OXI Day – the day the PM refused to allow Italian troops to march through Greece and so effectively joining the allies).

These happen regularly throughout the year and each week there is probably at least one saints day and every two months a larger event. However these are the only variety and so people are faced with very little choice regarding their entertainment – either you are involved or you are at home as usual.

### **Ekdromes, excursions**

Excursions of the townspeople are organized by families, groups of friends, the various associations and the schools. Visits organized by schools and associations are made to Athens e.g. to the newly opened Acropolis museum and to the theatre/night clubs, also to religious sites.

These may be for one day and from time to time 3 to 5 day excursions were organized e.g. by the folklore association with its dance group to Istanbul, by the women's association to an Island, by the last year of the high school to Spain. The local bus company also organizes tours (3- 5 days) to Asia Minor, Tinos Island, three to four times a year

Some people express some anxiety about going on excursions with other people who have more money and so may want to eat out which they can't afford.

Also included as sub-categories:

*Ekdromes* into the village – by organized coach parties, or by relatives/friends to visit

*Holidays* – low income families are eligible for supported holidays (one week) in the summer. Children frequently go to summer camp – traditionally for the townspeople on the mountain, now also at the sea. May be run by the church, the government or privately. Young people go on holiday with friends to the sea, or to visit friends or family

*Visiting family* – townspeople visit family in other countries (USA, Canada, UK) and other parts of Greece. For women in particular these visits may also partly be ‘work’ (dhouleies) as they may do a good number of sorting, cleaning, cooking tasks for the people they are visiting (usually children)

### **Going out**

This category is split into three sections – *vgaino* (I am going out), *volta* (stroll) and *hanging out*. A further subsection relates to the conversations and banter that may take place when one is out.

#### *Vgaino*

Vgaino is usually linked to going out for a kafe (coffee), for a meal or for a drink. It has various degrees of temporal organization and meetings will be planned, but appointments are not too strictly kept and one thing may lead to another. The main aim would appear to be to have a good time, relax, have a good conversation, catch up on the news etc. – keep in the social flow. Coded data include long descriptions to show the coming and going/fluid nature of ‘vgaino’, especially when out for a ‘kafe’

Having a coffee - perhaps the ‘corner stone’ of daily life. The most common invitation to receive - ‘let’s go for a coffee or come for a coffee’. Coffee is not the focus and some of the men will drink an ouzo or a tsipouro with meze from quite early in the morning – the focus is on the conversation and the social contact and being part of the social flow – being out (people will sit on their own). Importance of coffee drinking (for men) expressed by Mr Nikos commenting on the poor economic situation says ‘and soon a man won’t be able to even buy a coffee for his son. It is a terrible situation’. Women will also meet friends for coffee, either in the square or invite them to their homes. Events are an excuse to go out and have a coffee afterwards. Having a coffee is also linked to the public games of the children in the square (which their parents have a coffee or ouzo) and with people reading the daily papers over their coffee. Sometimes people will talk about going to the square where the possibilities for activities range from chatting casually to someone you bump into, having a coffee, reading the paper, having a snack or a meal. This is also possible in some of

the tavernas which will serve coffee and food, with no pressure to move on or leave.

Having a meal – people will usually eat meat (provatina – roast mutton) when they go out for a meal. A more ‘snacky’ meal would be souvlakia. A new taverna that serves more ‘fancy’ food is popular with some people as a change from the usual. Having a meze with your beer is not considered a meal.

Clubbing and night out – includes going out for a drink at night to a bar, to a full evening out with live, or not, music and dancing at either a club or taverna.

*Volta* (walk/stroll).

This is very different from going out for a coffee, a meal or a drink, as there is no specific aim (in the more western understanding of the word) but one is going for the volta itself – it may be for a stroll, a drive, to ride one’s bike, to look at the windows in the town, to go down to one’s fields. It may be alone or with others. It is closely linked to one’s subjective state – one is in the moment, in place and it will last as long as one needs it too.

*Hanging out* (no equivalent Greek word)

Includes walking up and down the street with friends – common amongst teenagers and young people, sitting on walls or standing on street corners chatting to friends (all ages). There is usually ongoing talk - gossiping, telling stories, gaining information, *kalabouri* (banter), and at the same time an ongoing scanning of others in the area – who is doing what – which will also be commented on. Includes the casual conversations as people meet in the street, exchanging information and gossip. Also the large percentage of the shop keepers who sit outside their shop doors chatting when they don’t have customers and women who sit outside their front doors or on their balconies (particularly in the afternoon). Also includes people wandering around and investigating what is going on e.g. why a door has been left open, or why someone is cleaning the steps of the cultural centre. One does not go out to hang out – but it perhaps better describes the quality of the way going out is done, the temporal and spatial organisation

### *Conversation*

Conversations held while out – men and mixed groups discuss politics both national and local. Women and mixed groups will discuss children, food and dishes. Other themes – gardening, holidays, excursions – depending on who is present and what has been going on. Women who meet daily talk about small everyday matters – who rang who and what was said, what they bought from the market, what they will cook, their needlework. Some gossip more than others. There may be power games and one-upmanship and a certain amount of control – how to do things the ‘right’ way, support for what is perceived as ‘normal’ or ‘correct’. Stories of old happenings are told in a very ritualised way and I may hear the same event more than once told in the same way.

There was rare discussion of feelings apart from expressed anger at political decisions, but loneliness, frustration, upset (i.e. personal or intimate family related) were not mentioned

Kalabouri is common not only when hanging out but also as part of going out with one’s *parea* and an important element of having a good time. *Kalabouri* – how does it compare to banter. *Kalabouri* is I think, what people expect of their *parea*. When you are out with your *parea* a good time is achieved when there is plenty of joking, teasing, in loud, happy voices. Serious conversations do not take place, although two people may sit more closely together and have a more private conversation. Someone will be considered a not very good *parea* (not good company) if they are not able to take part in *kalabouri* but will not be rejected as *parea* groups usually consist of an assortment of people, maybe friends from school years, where long years of association makes one tolerant of each other.

### **Ksekourasi, rest**

It is considered usual to have a rest – either sleeping or watching TV at lunchtime. Many people watch TV in the evenings too.

### **Little acts**

A variety of 'small' activities take place – small in the sense of with a short temporal duration and not always directly linked to the ongoing occupations/activities. In this general category are included such one-off events as a customer getting up from his table to fix the fountain in the square and then returning to his table. Sub categories are linking acts, acts that help maintain the social place, and tinkering.

#### *Linking acts*

These are small things which may cause a change in the flow of occupation e.g. Makis flashes his headlights at me to draw my attention and then we went for coffee – not arranged previously. A wave, a shout, may also be a phone call or a 'tell us about...' invitation to someone passing by

#### *Maintaining social place*

A wide range of short activities, flowing throughout the day that facilitate keeping contacts, one's place in the flow and knowledge of what is going on (surveillance). Includes:

- chatting, greetings, as one walks through the streets, bump into people while shopping, people pass by your house etc. Conversation with known people will be a 'bringing up to date' with news. First conversations with us are about where we have a house, who we bought it from and checking that my husband is not a local. People also keep in daily (usually) contact with family by phone – both with relatives in the village e.g. adult children may ring their elderly parent also living in the village at least once a day (and up to 4 times a day), and with children studying or living in other towns. Conversations can be more direct than would be usual in the UK – comments on how your cooking could have been improved by adding or doing something else, that your old hair style was better, that the colour you painted a wall is not right, that you have not pruned your trees properly etc. There are also ritual greetings to use when someone has bought something new or had their hair cut, or it is their name day (yiorti)
- Watching – sitting on balconies, in windows, in squares watching who is coming and going, what they are carrying, who they are with.
- Learning what's going on - people phoned around to learn the results of the elections and who has died. Also phoning from Athens to learn local news.
- The offering of food: as a gift between neighbours, friends, for visitors, often local/seasonal or homemade produce, kidoni, halva, walnuts. Taking food to

people living elsewhere (particularly children). A borrowed dish is returned with something in it (not essential but good for the *trivi*). Paying for coffees or meals.

- Sharing food grown or a slaughtered animal between extended family members
- Doing small tasks with other people – e.g. going shopping in Mallia or for plants, to buy train tickets, to have a car fixed, being given a lift – often done with a friend or relation
- Using people one ‘knows’. e.g. the taxi driver, where you buy bread/meat/vegetables/cakes, using only recommended workers/painters/builders/gardeners
- Meeting one’s *parea* for a coffee (daily for older men)

### *Tinkering/Tactics*

Small actions done to turn a situation to one’s own advantage, to demonstrate power or control or to fix it to suit you. There may be some overlap with ‘maintaining social place’, but coded here are those that seem more deliberately manipulative than the previous category. Requires awareness of power plays, and ability to ‘read’ the situation. Also includes maintaining one’s autonomy within the social flow.

- Altering physically a situation to suit one’s own needs e.g. going and changing the music that is being played in a public space, bringing out cushions to sit on, placing a broom so it looks as if you have been sweeping
- Commenting/correcting how someone else does something- e.g. negatively on your colour of nail varnish, whether your sun glasses suit you, that you took your teabag out of the cup too soon, that you drank your coffee before cleaning your greens
- Talking about something that you know about and others do not. E.g. woman talking of experiences in Italy that knows other women do not have.
- Semi ‘illegal’ acts such as smoking when it is forbidden, children driving trucks on agricultural roads, the old man ‘not really needing a current driving license to drive in the village’, double parking.
- Positioning oneself strategically physically e.g. taking a chair to sit in the middle of the group to tell a story; standing in order to give orders and maintain authority; placing your hand on someone’s shoulder to indicate a relationship

- Checking which shops has the best items or only going to the person who you know will serve you as you want.

### **One-off events**

Single, isolated, one-off events, e.g. a man having a heart attack in the kafeneio, a robbery at the bank

### **Traditional occupations**

All the things currently done either because of tradition (e.g. making traditional biscuits at Xmas) or to re-learn older traditions (e.g. the courses organised to learn cut-lace making and the traditional breads)

### **Yiortes, celebration/name days within the family**

Saint's Days are celebrated within the family as well as by the whole town – name day celebrations (on the day of the Saint you are named after) were traditionally celebrated rather than birthdays. Children named after grandparents so some names common within particular families. Today, children's birthdays also celebrated. Also included here formal visits (epsikepseis) to another house/family.

Subcategory:

Births, marriages and deaths. Births/baptisms and marriages in particular are important for creating new alliances through the roles of godparents and koumbari (best man/woman). All such life cycle events have rituals associated with them

### **What isn't done**

What people choose not to take part in, or do not want to do, or someone will not do with them





## ***Appendix H***

### ***Example of Fieldnotes with Notes of Analysis***

## Example of field notes with notes for analysis

206 Saturday 5th March 2011

Not raining but still grey. Last Saturday of Carnival and it is the town's bonfire this evening.

...

When we have finished I walk down the hill intending to go to the museum. Outside the hotel I see Ka. Tina and having greeted each other, I asked her if we will see her singing tomorrow and she says 'no, I am wearing black' and I say, 'oh I am sorry have you lost someone' and she says 'yes, her koumbara's husband and the forty days aren't up yet'.

*Rituals around death and mourning periods. Varying length of time for wearing black depending on relationship with dead person, also one cannot have 'fun' – here singing - to show respect.*

*Koumbara – best woman from her own wedding or may mean one of her children's God parents – same word is used for a variety of relationships created during the sacrament of a church service. Same rituals around death and mourning periods apply to them and their family as for blood relations. Best man/woman and God parents have special relationship with family – way of extending and cementing relationships beyond blood relations.*

*Sometimes I get the feeling (as in this case) that the tradition is kept in order to avoid gossip.*

She then says, 'do you want to come in and have a coffee' and I accept with pleasure.

*Offering of coffee – typical activity both with friends and acquaintances – here is an invitation to get to know each other better. Time of day also important - it is about 11.30 by now, so dhouleies (jobs) are done and there is time for a coffee before lunch preparations. Coffee is also drunk in the afternoon (6 o'clock) after rest time.*

*Informality of this invitation also not unusual – you bump into people and the day progresses from there depending on what people feel like doing and their available time.*

We go into the hotel, straight ahead is the reception desk and to the left a small sitting area, with three, two-seater settees around a square wooden table and on the fourth side a backless stool/chair, covered in the same fabric as the settees. Across the table, placed diagonally is a hand embroidered cloth (rectangle) and on it a cut glass vase with fresh multi-coloured carnations. In the corner is a higher small round table covered in an embroidered cloth and there is bookcase/dresser against the far wall.

*Example of business and home combined. Embroidered cloths – typical coverings of tables and chair arms and backs. Usually embroidered by housewife – demonstrating one's worth and competence? Cut glass also popular – often vases and ashtrays given as wedding presents – luxury items because not functional traditionally?*

Opposite are the windows of the hotel with thin white curtains which look out over one part of the square, and Mrs Tina sits on the stool which lets her look out into the street. As we talk her gaze is usually out onto the street.

*Surveillance of public areas, keeping in touch, seeing what is going on – keeping part of the flow.*

There are garlands up and coloured paper decorations for the carnival.

*Contributing to communal festivities – the decorated hotel, like many of the restaurants, adds to the general sense that it is a holiday period. It is a holiday period because sufficient numbers of people in the town contribute individually to the communal festivities.*

She says we often have said hello to each other but we have never really got a chance to talk to each other. She offers me coffee and I ask for a metro Greek coffee. She goes off into, from what I can hear, a kitchen which is just down the corridor.

*Greek (Turkish in origin but always called Greek) coffee. Usual drink of the older people. In summer some older, and most of younger people will drink cold Nescafe – frappé. I usually ask for Greek coffee as I perceive it to be the easiest for people to make and possibly makes me feel that I am fitting in.*

I look around the room – it reminds me of hotels that I have seen in old films of Greece – perhaps the multicoloured marble floor, covered in spotlessly clean mats, on the

ground floor, with stairs going up to the bedrooms. Behind the desk, on the wall, is the box for the room keys, only two are empty, there are 13 keys in place with heavy wooden cubes attached to them. I wonder if that means the guests are out or that the hotel is not booked up.

Mrs Tina comes back carrying a tray, two pretty cups and saucers (white with blue flowers) with the coffee, two glasses of water, and a plate with cookies (traditional plaited pattern – koulourakia). She puts the tray on the table and puts in front of me the coffee, water and the biscuits close by.

*Coffee always served with glasses of water, and in 'good' homes, always on a tray. Koulourakia – traditional biscuits and no doubt home made. Offering of food to a guest. Many of the single people I know will look to have their coffee at this time with someone else. The men often go the kafeneio at this time. Here Mrs Tina is have one too – taking the opportunity of me passing by to have her coffee with someone*

She sits on the stool facing the window and the street. She is dressed in a black skirt and cardigan, the cardigan has some black pearl buttons. She has a shock of white hair and a rosy, cheerful face. She is rather stout but moves easily enough. She has a slight tremble and I have to speak clearly and a little bit loudly or she doesn't catch what I say. We drink our coffee – wishing 'stin ugeia mas' – good health.

*Good health is always wished for when having a coffee like this, almost a toast.*

She asks me where we have our house (which I thought she knew as we have known her since we were first building it) and I tell her. She is surprised and said she thought we lived in the town, and mentions two houses, one of which she thought was ours.

*Placing me geographically, but also homes are linked to people. So knowing where we live gives her information on whose house we are living in and who lives in our neighbourhood.*

She is slightly restless as she sits, and I wonder if she thinks I was someone else and is now uninterested in meeting me. She asks me next if we have children and details of those.

*Next stage in getting to know someone – asking about children. Home and children provide vital information in order to place one socially.*

She gets up and goes into the kitchen (later she tells me that when she has friends for coffee she stills does her jobs, ironing, cooking and I realise she has been going into the kitchen to stir some food).

I tell her about the study and she tells me something about her life. She was born in the village and went to work in Athens for one of the associations and then for a company that make shoes. If I understood correctly she was a typist.

She would come back to the town and 'mou eipan gia ena paidi – and they told me about a 'child' - and he was a good man, a good character, good looking'.

*Matchmaking. Importance of character – to be a good man, and also good looking. Also she didn't go to Athens to find a husband but to work, rather it was expected that she would marry someone from the town. Her move to Athens and her work seems to have been relatively unimportant, i.e. it was considered temporary, she gives me few details and she came back regularly to the town.*

*Her marriage important part of her life story, and that she had made a good match*

'The only thing I am sorry about is that we didn't have many years together, I have been a widow 35 years'. I ask how long they were married and she says '17, my daughter (Ariadne) was 16 when he died and my son 12'.

*Providing important information on her marriage and about her children. The length of time she has been a widow – a long time to be on your own (women as martyrs); honouring her husband (a good woman)*

I ask about the hotel. She says that they had put in the papers for the license with the name 'Melissa' and had just got the temporary license when he had died. They then applied for a new name and it now has the name of her dead husband.

*Honouring her dead husband by naming the hotel after him.*

She says she has a good life, she has many friends and parea and is often out.

*Important aspect of a good life is to have friends, parea (companions to go out with) and that she could often get out. A good life is to have a good time – sociable*

She explains that the hotel has a wireless phone and so she takes it with her if she wants to pop out.

*Explaining how she manages to get out, as she also has the hotel, so I might be presuming that it is difficult to get away. Using technology to facilitate her ability to go out.*

If she wants to go away she will during a time, either when the hotel is quiet or she will close the hotel. The only thing she has never done, she says, is to go away over one of the long weekends (like bank holidays).

*Importance of going out and going away.*

She is still restless and I can't decide if I should go and make a move to leave, but she says to stay, she is just restless and soon Anna (helper?) will go and get the pie. She has made xorta pie (pie with greens) and it is at the bakery cooking, and I should stay to try some. Also her daughter will be coming soon.

*Doesn't seem to feel the need to hide her restlessness and is comfortable to explain it to me.*

*Presumption that I know who Anna is. This seems typical – perhaps in a community where people know each other it is easy to forget that I might not – in the same way as in a larger city there may be a presumption that you would not know someone else.*

*Using the bakery to cook one's own dishes. Very common in the past – women used to take their bread to the bakery to cook, but also large tins of food e.g. stuffed tomatoes, but also joints of meat. You can cook in this way larger dishes than fit in a usual house oven, but also if the bakery uses a wood burning oven the food turns out more tasty. There is a bakery almost next door to the hotel.*

Soon enough I see her daughter at the door, she is talking on her mobile, I go to greet her but she waves me away as she says she has been ill. She is talking to Kiki and passes the phone to me, we have a chat and Kiki says they will pass by the hotel.

*Fluid and informal arrangements. Network of known people (gnostous) and parea (companions).*

When we have finished the phone conversation she sits opposite me, she says she has been chopping wood, her son is away and so she has had to do it.

*Gender divisions of household tasks – here arranged because of her divorce*

*Tasks required – heating for the house*

She tells me she hasn't been well for some time and has just had diarrhoea the last few days.

*Details of illness openly discussed that I feel would not have been said so openly in the UK. (Old men talking about their prostate problems at the KAPI)*

I know Ariadne from the past – a tall woman with long fair hair, rather strong opinions, she always seemed rather 'larger than life'. Now she is quieter and more serious. I tell her about the research and that I would be interested to talk more to her about it sometime. She has been working at the health centre and tells me that she has just taken early retirement – 25 years service and an underage child – of course reduced pension – and she wasn't so bothered but there will be changes to the regulations re pensions from the summer and she doesn't want to give up the chance to leave, when she may have to work another 16 years otherwise. She still hasn't really 'felt' what it is like as she has had to be rushing to sort out the papers for her pension.

*Retirement age fixed by legislation. Women often retire at 50 if they have had children (as Ariadne here). Idea that they have enough to do in life with looking after the children and home, and 'deserve'? to retire early.*

*Rumours of up-coming changes to the law due to economic crisis are driving many people to take early retirement.*

*Administrative processes taking a good deal of time*

We talk a bit about the older people in the village. She tells me how many of them are quite alone and how their children are openly uninterested in them. She is shocked how she has had to ring children in Athens to let them know their parent is ill (because

of her work at the health centre) and how, because they know her they express some interest but she feels otherwise they wouldn't even do that.

*Relationships between elderly parents (town) and adult children (Athens)*

She says that has changed so much in the last 10 or 15 years. People only come to the village to see their parents in order to take money from them, from the very small pensions that they are receiving. They have built big houses in Athens and don't have the money to pay for them now. She says she doesn't know why people have changed so much. She wonders if it is because people are living longer and so some of the 90 year olds, have children who are themselves 70 and with their own problems. She says the older people in the village don't know how lonely they are. I disagree and say they do talk about it, or at least indirectly – how important it is to have people around you or how in the past on such holiday days there used to be glenti's and everyone around.

*Changing nature of relationships, although children (even quite old) still interdependent relationships with parents.*

*Loneliness of isolated older people in the town*

I ask about the change from working to retirement and what she wants to do with her retirement. She says that 'you don't really know me, but things haven't been easy, I have brought up the child on my own. I would really like to have some time for myself, to go somewhere, a spa (maybe I won't have the money but that is something else), but to have some time.

*Desire to do things for one's self. To have time. Bringing up child on own experienced as 'not easy' (prevents one from having time for oneself)*

And then there is the hotel, and my brother is building a kafeneion next door. Of course that is a problem too as most of the work is at the weekend and the weekend is the time I can be with my son so I don't want to work all weekend, and we will have staff of course, but I may do something there.

*Some involvement with the family business. Own son given priority over brother's business*



I have done many things, we will see. In two years my son will finish school, and he may...Of course he isn't doing all that well at school, but they change, he may want to study somewhere. I have seen that with other friends, especially the boys, they decide what they want to do later. So I don't know where I may be in two years'.

*Perceived on-going practical involvement with son even when going to Higher Education*

She says that living in the village has its difficulties; there are not so many things to do,  
*Lack of things to do in town*

but for her, with her son, it has been the best possible solution. She has friends who have lived for many years in Mallia and now they don't know what is happening with their children. Here, you know the places where they go, and ok, you don't follow them around but you know the places and other people know them. And I always say if they are going to do something they will do it one way or another. And there are drugs in the village, you know, but you just have to hope.

*Worry about child. Perceived safety of town due to surveillance of others and self. But also that some risks are beyond one's control.*

I comment about teenagers and boundaries and 'hearing' the parent. She says she doesn't really know as she pretty much did what she wanted. Her father died when she was 16 and her mother, well she had enough herself, debts and so forth, so pretty much she remembers herself as she is now since then. She had to be responsible for herself since then, making her own decisions.

*Own experience of being more independent due to death of her father*

Her mother comes back having popped somewhere. Some guests arrive and her mother shows them to their room. Frosso chats to the two teenage girls with their parents, asking if they have their costumes. They say yes, they have friends in the village. And you can go out too, says Frosso, the older girl says 'if they let us'. Frosso says, all the bars are here about, it is safe here they can let you without fear.

When they have gone to their rooms she comments on how easy it is for the young people to go out here compared to Athens.

*Safety of town*

*Openness with customers*

She comments how if she goes to Athens she likes to go to something different, to eat Chinese or sushi, or to go to the theatre.

*Going to Athens to do something different. Limited opportunities in the town*

Her mother sits close to us, the cleaning women, Anna, comes down and says she is going to get the pie. I ask if they use the bakery to cook it, and Frosso says yes, 'seeing as she opens the fillo (makes the pastry) she might as well make a big pie and then we take it to the founo to cook'.

*Household tasks – how cooking is organised*

The woman comes back with a big circular dish and it is taken into the kitchen. Mrs Tina brings me out a plate with a piece on it. Ariadne looks at it and says 'you have given her a middle piece, you should give her an edge'. She takes my plate and comes back with an edge too, saying and now you have two pieces'.

*Food provided without asking. Idea of what are the best pieces. Relationship between daughter and Mother*

Mrs Tina says 'you will eat it with your hands'. I eat and it is wonderful.

*I always feel bossed about by this sort of comment / mothering and directive, or caring?*

Frosso goes to the kitchen and brings back two pieces in foil which she says are for my husband.

*Gift of food – maintaining the social fabric*

Mrs Tina looks at the flowers on the table and says she is going to go and buy some roses, her son has said they should have roses. Ariadne says not to, the carnations are fine and they are spring flowers and lighter, more appropriate for the carnival 'you tell him that' she says to her mother. She explains that the hotel belongs to the brother and so she doesn't really have much to do with things, but for little things like that, ok...

*Negotiating with family members. Who has the power/makes decisions – in this case it is the brother's hotel so he decides, and the mother listens to him. But Ariadne is able to interfere here, but gives her mother an excuse to use with her son*

I ask if her brother lives in the village and she says he comes and goes between the village and Pacifika, he has the fast delivery service for the post office (and I check who it is). They had had the whole county, but it had been too much, they had had 15 employees, bikes etc., now they have a smaller area.

*Effect of economic crisis reducing work.*

*I also check I know relationships*

At some point she comments that her mother keeps very well, but the cost of doctors is a problem. She had been talking about having to go to Mallia to a doctor on Thursday, even though she had been ill, because she had booked the appointment so long in advance that she didn't want to miss it. She says, although the village is convenient for some services, for doctors it is a problem. And the tax office will be going to Mallia. We comment how it is ok for us with cars but for the older people with the poor public transport it is a problem.

*Spatial arrangements of services. Local transport influencing occupation*

*Doctor's appointments, waiting times*

*Economic crisis leading to closure of local tax office*

Kiki rings and says they are in the village and where are we, I say still at the hotel and she says they will pass by. She still hasn't come when I leave 5 minutes later.

*Casual arrangements*

A guest comes down to leave and complains about the noise of drilling next door. He says it is illegal on a Saturday and his wife says, 'here is the village, it doesn't work like that here'. Frosso assures them there won't be drilling at quiet time.

*Athenians perceptions of the town as being less regulated.*

*Quiet time (middle of day) enforced by law.*

When they leave I comment about having to deal with all sorts of people in a hotel. She recounts some stories of guests and their complaints, she does not seem particularly worried by these – they are more stories of how strange some people's behaviour is. I get up to go and we exchange phone numbers and arrange to meet again.

*Overall:*

- *Working towards networking, social relationships, keeping in touch/social flow through invitation for coffee, sharing food, looking out of window*
- *Family arrangements – close interrelationships and daily doings of family members, maintaining*
- *Food, cooking, household tasks, using ingredients available locally (xorta) and local bakers for cooking*
- *Influence of institutional arrangements on occupation – doctors, public transport, tax office*
- *Flexible/loose temporal arrangements*
- *Interweaving and overlapping of people's occupation*

***Appendix I***

***Calendar of Annual Events***

# Annual events 2010

Colour coding: **Public holidays**    **Secular events**  
**Church holidays**    **Fasting Periods**

## January

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

New Year's day  
 Epiphany  
 24 Beginning of Carnival  
 30 School Holiday

## July

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

## February

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28						

Epiphany / Smoke Thursday/ Bonfire  
 Town Bonfire  
 Carnival Sday/ Clean Monday/ Lent

## August

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

Dormition of the Virgin

## March

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

Women's Day  
 Independence day & Annunciation  
 Palm Sunday / Holy week

## September

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

Schools start/ Start of bazaar  
 Annual bazaar

## April

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

Good Friday/ Easter Saturday  
 Easter Sunday/ Easter Monday

## October

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

Oil Day

## May

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

May Day  
 Day of Ascension  
 Pentecost

## November

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

40 days fasting until Xmas  
 Presentation of Virgin- Ylort

## June

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

Schools close for Summer

## December

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

Christmas  
 Public holiday

## ***Annual events in the village - 2010***

When the day of the week is given it indicates a holiday that is related to Easter and so changes date each year. Date and day given is for 2010

### **December**

#### **31<sup>st</sup> – New Year's Eve**

Seeing in the New Year is an important event. Families will usually eat together before midnight. St. Vasillis (the equivalent of Santa Claus) arrives after midnight with gifts for children. Various traditions are re-enacted after midnight: breaking a pomegranate outside the house by throwing it the ground; the first person to enter the house after midnight should enter with their right foot; playing cards; cutting the Vassilopitta (a sweet bread in which a coin is hidden), the person who finds the coin in their piece will have good fortune throughout the year. Many people go out to a night club after midnight.

### **January**

#### **1<sup>st</sup> – New Year's Day – St. Vasillis Day**

National holiday

Usually a quiet day, lunch as a family, coffee with friends

#### **6<sup>th</sup> - Epiphany**

National holiday

Church service is held near a water source (symbolising the water of the baptism). In coastal regions a cross is thrown into the sea and people race to swim to reach it first. The person who does is considered to be particularly blessed for the year.

#### **Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> – Triodion**

Beginning of Carnival

Carnival lasts for the 40 days before Lent (therefore the date it starts changes from year to year)

**30<sup>th</sup> – Yiorti ton Treion Ierarxon** (Holiday of the Three Hierarchs – theologians and patron saints of literature and Christian education)

School holiday (established 1842 by the University of Athens and later extended to all educational levels)

## **February**

**2<sup>nd</sup> – Ipapanti – Presentation of the Lord.**

Celebration of when Jesus was first presented in the temple, 40 days after his birth. This tradition is still followed in Greek Orthodox Church and babies and their mothers are meant to remain in the home until 40 days after the birth when they go to the church. In the town the Women's Association arranges a coffee evening for the women of the town.

**Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> – Tsiknopempti – Smoked Thursday**

The middle Thursday of Carnival when it is traditional to eat barbequed meat – oil is poured over it to make it smoke. The majority of people will go out either to a tavern or to a friend's house. Tavernas are decorated with streamers and masks

**Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> – Local bonfires in the neighbourhoods.**

The penultimate Saturday of Carnival. Traditionally bonfires were lit in each neighbourhood, the women brought food and wine, and there was singing of traditional carnival songs and dancing. Recently, bonfires have been organised by some of the classes of the High school and located more centrally in the town (from 20.00)



### **Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> – Main central bonfire for all**

Wild holly (pounari) is cut by farmers throughout the preceding week and huge quantities are stacked up in the open space above the upper square. Food is organized through the Women's association – women are given either a kilo of mince meat to make meat balls or a kilo of cheese to make cheese pies. The food is served free to all who attend and there is also wine available. Local musicians play and there is dancing round the fire, including a *Vlachiko gamo* (a peasants wedding). (from 20.00).

### **Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> – Last Sunday of Carnival**

12.00 Parade with school children

Cooking of a long souvla of barbequed meat, served free to the public in the lower square.

Dancing display by some classes from the Folk Lore Association and singing by the choir

### **Monday 15<sup>th</sup> – Kathari Deftera – Clean Monday**

National holiday

The first day of Lent this lasts for 50 days. It is traditional to fly kites. In the lower square traditional food is available free – beans, taramosalata (fish roe dip), olives, stuffed vine leaves and lagana (unleavened bread)

## **March**

### **8<sup>th</sup> – Women's Day**

Women go out for evening together, usually organized by the Women's Association. Occasionally they organize an evening out in Athens

### **25<sup>th</sup> – Independence Day and Feast of Annunciation**

National holiday

Celebrates the fight for independence from the Ottoman occupation, which officially commenced on the 25<sup>th</sup> of March 1821. A military parade is held in Athens or Thessalonica. In the town all the schools and associations take part following a church service, wreaths are laid and speeches made. In the town many of the school children wear traditional costumes

### **Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> – Palm Sunday**

Throughout holy week preparations are made for Easter celebrations. Most people will fast this week, even if they have not during the preceding 40 days. Houses are cleaned thoroughly. On Thursday it is traditional to dye hard boiled eggs bright red. Traditional Easter biscuits are also baked, twisted into a variety of traditional shapes. On Thursday night the church and sepulchre are prepared for Good Friday

The schools are closed from Palm Sunday to the Sunday of Thoma (Thomas) – the week after Easter Sunday

## **April**

### **2<sup>nd</sup> – Good Friday – *Epitáphios* – the burial of Christ**

National holiday

A church service is held in the morning and some businesses and shops do not open until it is finished.

Following a church service at about 21.00 a procession is made through each Parish. The epitáphios is an icon of the dead Christ which is laid on a table-like structure with wooden pillars and arches which is decorated with flowers (the bier of Christ). It is carried through the streets followed by the priests and church officials. The people carry natural, beeswax coloured candles, lit from a single flame within the church. In the town the processions from all four churches meet up in the upper square. The four biers are placed side by side

and during the service that follows are lifted as high as possible towards heaven.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> - Easter Saturday - *H Anástasi* – the Resurrection**

An evening service culminates in the Resurrection at midnight (marked by distribution of the Holy Light followed by bells ringing and fireworks). The service completed at 01.30 when the fast can be broken, although many people leave immediately after midnight. A traditional soup made of the internal organs of the lamb is served, the red eggs are 'played' like conkers, and traditional Easter sweet bread is served.

### **4<sup>th</sup> – Easter Sunday**

Lambs are barbequed in communal pits in neighbourhoods over pounari (wild holly bush). Up to 25 lambs may be cooked together, for example in the Drossia area where everyone cooks together in the square. The fires are usually lit very early (about six to seven o'clock) and often the lambs are cooked by 11 or 12. While they are cooking wine is served and snacks of liver, hard boiled eggs, etc., and there are some traditional songs and dancing. Each family eats separately in their own home, and later there may be more dancing.

### **5<sup>th</sup> – Easter Monday**

National holiday

There is a display of folk dances by some of the classes of the Folk Law Association, held after the Church Service in late morning, held in an open space to the edge of the town. The Folk Law Association serve snacks, drinks and a gift of a red egg.

## **May**

### **1<sup>st</sup> – May Day – General Strike (national holiday)**

It is traditional to picnic, and in the town most people go up the mountain in family groups. A wreath is made of wild flowers to hang on door of home.

**Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> – Ascension (40 days after Easter)**

**Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> – Pentecost (50 days after Easter)**

The day after Pentecost is a holiday for schools and employees

**June**

**14<sup>th</sup> – Junior schools close for summer holidays**

Preceding this there has been a number of school events and displays. The high school finishes at a similar time depending on exam schedules

**July**

No specific events

**August**

**1<sup>st</sup> – 15 days of fasting begins**

This is leading to the major holy day on the 15<sup>th</sup>

During this period the municipality usually organizes a number of events, usually including a play performance by an Athenian company, one or two concerts, and a dance exhibition with folklore groups from other parts of Greece

## **15<sup>th</sup> – Assumption of the Virgin.**

National holiday

Saints day celebrations for all women called Maria – a major holiday throughout the country

## **September**

### **13<sup>th</sup> – School starts**

First day – Blessing by local priest

### **18<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> – Annual Bazaar**

Traditionally one of the major events of the year, where animals as well as household goods and clothes were sold. Now it is restricted to food stalls, household goods and clothes. A time to be out and about, the last 'event' before the winter

## **October**

### **28<sup>th</sup> October – 'Oxi' day**

National holiday

Celebrating the day in 1940 that the Prime Minister of Greece, Metaxas, refused to permit the passage of Italian troops through Greece and led to Greece's entry to World War II alongside the Allies. Similar celebrations to the 25<sup>th</sup> March

National Holiday

## **November**

### **15<sup>th</sup> – Fasting period begins**

The beginning of the 40 day fast leading up to Christmas

### **17<sup>th</sup> – Polytechnic Day**

School holiday

Commemorating the end of the Junta in 1974 due to the resistance of the Polytechnic students

### **21<sup>st</sup> – The Presentation of the Virgin**

Local holiday

This is a religious holiday nationally but also a local holiday, similar to a harvest festival. There is a church service followed by religious procession leading to a blessing of the farmers at the agricultural cooperative.

(Every second year the Folk Lore Association organises a Festival on the weekend closest to the 21<sup>st</sup> – not held in 2010)

## **December**

### **25<sup>th</sup> – Christmas Day**

A mainly religious festival. A church service is held at 05.00 after which it is traditional to go home to eat a meat soup. A family meal will usually be held.

The 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> are national holidays

### **31<sup>st</sup> – New Year's Eve**

***Appendix J: Associations of the Town***

## Associations of the town

There are a number of associations which represent and promote the interests of specific population groups in the town:

Young people's association

Women's association

Commercial Association

Farmers' cooperative association

Parents' and Guardians' Association (of local schools)

Bee handler's Association

Livestock Association

There are also a number of associations related to recreational activities or aiming to preserve the local heritage:

Folk Law - Dance Association: organises folk dancing lessons, has a choir and runs the local museums

Hill Walking Association: Runs ski classes for children in the winter and organises hikes in the summer

The Athletic Association (football)

Skyclub association: for paragliding and hang gliding, with four take off points on the mountain above the village. Organises competitions as part of the Greek league

Car and motor bike association: organises the Rally Sprint in the area



## Hunting Association

There are also a number of associations associated with the various geographical areas in and around the village, e.g. the Association of Drossiotes, the Farming Association of the Upper Barns, the Farming Association of the Lower Barns