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Eleni-Christina Sotiropoulou

Technological Educational Institute of Crete

November 2007

Online at <http://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/6371/>

MPRA Paper No. 6371, posted 20. December 2007 11:35 UTC

## TOURISM, VILLAGE SPACE AND THE RE- APPROPRIATION OF RURAL: TOWARDS A NEW SOCIAL ORGANISATION OF THE COUNTRYSIDE<sup>i</sup>

Eleni-Christina Sotiropoulou  
*Technological Educational Institute of Crete*

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*Modern countryside is increasingly becoming a place 'utilised' by city dwellers, a phenomenon particularly observable in Greece, where distances are relatively small and relations between villages and cities remain strong. The case of two Greek villages, where tourism has played a leading part in their social and economic recovery, will help us understand, through a conflict analysis, the way in which different expectations and aspirations expressed by various groups of local actors, concerning the use of rural space, determine the development and social organisation of rural areas.*

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**Keywords:** *tourism, appropriation conflicts, use of rural space*

### INTRODUCTION

This paper is part of a wider study, which deals with the recent social and economic changes occurring in the Greek countryside as well as with the spatial relationships that govern the rural territory.

The actual picture presented by the countryside is the result of intense, essential and most rapid transformations that took place in the bosom of the entire Greek society during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. New balances arising between territories, populations and ways of life condition this brand new face of the modern rural world.

The village, formerly represented by the rural community,<sup>ii</sup> and more generally rural society, opens its restrained geographic and social borders as rural population – meaning countryside residents – is being renewed, blended with new social groups. At the same time, rapidly developing transport encourages the commute to and from the countryside, cultural boundaries between urban and rural are getting indistinct, and new economic activities, beyond agriculture, are considerably growing in the rural space.

At the same time, these changes occurring in the life of countryside residents are accompanied by a greater shift made by modern society towards the assessment of rural areas. This phenomenon is due to the qualities attributed to rural space, such as better life quality, natural environment, and recreational and cultural virtues. Seen in this context, these specific countryside characteristics are turning into values within modern life's perceptions, especially for city dwellers. On the other hand, they reveal new alternative functions and ways to "use" and invest in rural areas.

In other words, we could speak of a new perception, a new way in which modern society perceives the countryside. Within this social context of expectations, the use and exploitation of rural space give rise to several conflicts between individuals or groups expressing different motives, aspirations and aims. Thus, local life, as well as local development, are influenced to some extent by the interference of individuals or groups, formal or not, who claim the right to participate in and determine the economical, social, political, cultural and environmental physiognomy of the village with which they identify themselves. This phenomenon is particularly observed in touristically developed areas.

The approach described above aims at investigating, in the first place, the way in which individuals and groups – whether they are countryside residents or simply countryside users – come into play with a particular space, tend to identify themselves with it and appropriate it, thus getting involved in a direct or indirect manner, with the formation of its residential, recreational, or environmental character, its social, cultural or economic local life. On the other hand, the approach adopted seeks to examine the way in which villagers react to the changes they confront. The confrontation of these two developing dynamics leads to a better understanding of the different positions occupied by local actors and of their interaction. Moreover, it illustrates the future development and image of the village.

In this paper, two case studies will be presented. A coastal village, Panormo, situated along the north coast of Crete and a mountainous village, Tsepelovo, located in the area of Central Zagori, in Epirus. Both villages owe their rather recent social and economic upturn to their tourist exploitation, initiated approximately fifteen years ago. Tourist development, launched progressively since the 1980s, has curbed the socio-economic decline with which both rural societies were confronted for several decades, and has imposed its own pace to local life. At the same time, it has introduced new tensions and conflicts between both old

and recent village residents. These tensions, which often change nature in the course of a village's evolution, reflect on the one hand the endeavour of the old status quo to inhibit the preponderance of a new situation. On the other hand, they illustrate the predominance and appropriation of rural territories by the mentality of city dwellers.

For each village case, we will specifically focus on the analysis of juxtapositions expressed between individuals or groups of different social categories who, in one way or another, interfere with local life, having an impact on local development and social cohesion. Our target, in the first place, is to reveal the intentions, motives and mentality of those who get involved in order to impose their own perceptions concerning the exploitation and use of rural space. In this manner, the analysis of conflict dynamics indicates the functions and utilities attributed to a specific territory, and reflects the way in which modern society perceives the modern countryside and rural areas in general.

## **PANORMO**

Built on the northern coast of Crete, in the prefecture of Rethymno, Panormo is situated alongside the Rethymno–Heraklio national road, in a distance of respectively 22 and 59 kilometres from the mentioned towns. In addition, through a well-developed road network, the village is connected to the hinterland of Mylopotamos and all neighbouring communities.

Panormo's splendid history begins at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Its advantageous geographic location encouraged the development of one of the most important commercial harbours in the region. It soon became a rich provincial town, with developed administrative services, manufacture, trade and a small but powerful bourgeoisie, which however declined right after the great crash in 1929 which dragged down to destruction its commercial community. In the meantime, the opening up of the 'old' national Rethymno-Heraklio road, traversing the hinterland of the province, marginalized the previously centrally situated Panormo. As a result of the economic disaster, the village faced a mass departure of its population, which found a way out of the crisis in internal and external immigration, which deteriorated in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Agriculture and stockbreeding became the main occupations of those who were left behind.

In 1970, the opening of the 'new' Rethymno – Heraklio national road along the north coast of Crete, re-established Panormo's direct

communication with all the big towns of the island. At the same time, the National Organisation of Tourism (EOT) made the first attempts to exploit the village's coastal location. Panormo, beyond its natural beauty, that of a small, picturesque bay, is also eminent amongst the neighbouring communities, for its attractive architectural heritage, a legacy of its glorious past.

Tourist traffic in Panormo has been growing since the mid 1980s, attracting at the same time investors, both villagers and external businessmen. Amongst the latter some originated from Panormo, while others, having no relation of origin with the place, foresaw and invested in its tourist exploitation. In the meantime, some small commercial shops, such as souvenir and traditional handcraft stores, jeweller's, taverns and coffee shops, mini markets and car rental agencies started to operate. For about fifteen years, Panormo managed to maintain low profile, family-oriented tourism, while its inhabitants combined agricultural activity with supplementary income from tourist activities.

In the late 1990s, three large hotel units, of approximately two thousand beds in total, started operating in the region. This event appeared to have a radical impact on the village's tourist profile. Today, apart from these three hotel units, nine smaller ones operate along with several rent-room units.

The situation in Panormo is actually shaped as follows: tourist growth has attracted new investors and has largely contributed to keeping village youth and families in the village. Furthermore, its central position with regard to the main road axis of Crete and to the up-country regions has attracted new inhabitants and has rendered Panormo an increasingly habitable community. Thus, today, it assembles several new residents, mainly Greeks and a few Europeans, who have chosen to buy or build a house in this scenic site by the sea, not far from the labour market of Rethymno, offering at the same time better and cheaper living conditions. In addition, an important population of economic immigrants who have found employment both in agriculture and tourism in the area have settled down in the village.

Over approximately ten years, Panormo enjoyed a spectacular revitalization of its economy and social life while its population practically appeared to have doubled, even if the figures between the last two inventories were fictitiously or provisionally raised because of the temporary presence of immigrants (Greek National Statistics Organisation, 1991 and 1992). As a permanent resident characteristically reports: "Panormo is no more the village it once was for it is not constituted by the same people. Some have left and others have come.

Today, eight different nationalities live here and half of our co-villagers are foreigners. During summertime, permanent residents represent only 15% of the population”.

In the bosom of this new village society, different expectations and aspirations expressed by all social groups – permanent and seasonal – give birth to contradictions and strong conflicts concerning the development of tourism and its impact on local life. In some respects, thanks to tourism, Panormo has undeniably regained its status. On the other hand, tourism has strongly affected many facets of village life, the aesthetic aspect of the community, the social cohesion of the local population, the customs and habits of the villagers, as well as the serenity and pace of rural life.

The major conflict that divides the villagers regards the type of development suitable for the growth of Panormo. In many ways, Panormites (Panormo’s residents) appreciate the advent of tourism, which brought about its social and economic recovery, nevertheless some aspects trigger off intense reactions, particularly since tourism has acquired a more massive profile.

Hence, on the one hand stand those who defend the expansion of the residential area and support the development of mass tourism, while on the other hand, are positioned those who stand up for the preservation of the natural and architectural profile of the settlement and seek to maintain the old social and cultural status quo. The latter defend small-scale family-oriented tourism based on quality.

In the second camp those who represent the older generation of Panormo join forces with a few members of the social group of ‘heterodimotes’, representing those who originate from the village but only occasionally live there, mostly during the summer and holidays.<sup>iii</sup> Both look forward to maintaining the old physiognomy of the village’s territory and act likewise, in a direct or indirect manner, in order to secure their position. Besides, they claim their right to have a strong voice in the decision-making regarding local development. Thus, a group of elder members of the old village society, who once held most important and reputable positions, refuse to pass the torch of decision making onto the younger generation of local leaders. Nicknamed ‘dinosaurs’ because of their attitude, these senior members object to the cession of public land to a large hotel for the purpose of a tennis court construction; they disagree with the expansion of the construction plan; they oppose the conversion of the old boarding school into a computer learning centre. In order to fulfil their aspirations, they get actively involved in the local governance and sometimes hinder the application of decisions taken by those

currently in charge. With the intention to make themselves heard and to rally behind their goals, they have re-established the old Research Association, which had first been established back in the 1930s, aiming at the supervision of local development and the sensitisation of the villagers.

Some members of the old generation object to the alterations made to village space by the construction of tourist lodgings. Furthermore, they protest against any changes in everyday life, imposed by the requirements of tourism. They miss the old familiar and peaceful ambience of village life, they resent the fact that many flower gardens have been uprooted and substituted by the fashionable and traditionally designed stone constructions. As they state “never has there been so much stone and so many cobbled-roads in the village as there are today”. They don’t appreciate the removal of poultry and other domestic animals from the residential area for aesthetic and sanitary reasons. For these elder villagers “Panormo has become a big commercial centre!” In favour of these attitudes are also some new residents, who took the decision to move into Panormo in their quest for a better quality of life, tranquillity and natural environment.

The heterodimotes, who haven’t been involved in the tourist business, share the discomfort of the elders. They explicitly turn against any change they observe when they return, almost every year, to spend the summer in their country house or family house. From their standpoint, Panormo represents the return to the village of childhood memories they had left behind, a kind of antidote to the hasty town life. They demand a peaceful village, neat and clean, traditional and cheap, always willing to offer its hospitality to its roving children. They disapprove of the architectural interventions and innovations, they criticise the few restorations, the high prices, the dirty coasts, the piling up of litter, the nuisance of noise and congestion. By means of an association, which they have founded, and through interventions in the local paper they attempt to meddle in the affairs of local life. Even if they are practically absent members of the village society, they stand in the local elections and demand from the villagers to take any decisions concerning local development and public life in their presence. Likewise, as registered members of the local agricultural co-operative, they claim their right to participate in the decision-making and to vote during the elections.

Those who live in Panormo throughout the year feel that heterodimotes, nicknamed fig-eaters, constantly harass and look down on them: “They arrive from Athens thinking that the whole village expects only them. They interfere in everything; they have an opinion about everything; in short, they still consider us peasants”. Moreover,

“Heterodimotes remonstrate with us about not recognising any more the village that they had left behind. However, they only come over to Panormo to gather their olives and eat the August figs; they sow discord among the villagers and then they go away. Instead of complaining about whether the cobblestones should be grey or white, they should come here to live permanently, to stay in winter, to contribute financially and then we could talk. In any case, the co-operative’s elections will be held after their departure.”

The prospect of expanding Panormo’s construction plan as well as its classification as a traditional Greek village, constitute two issues that illustrate in a vivid way the existing conflicts concerning the type of development appropriate for Panormo: that of mass tourism and the other of small-scale family-oriented tourism. At the head of the two sides taken are mainly businessmen involved in tourism, who, principally come from outside the village society. Groups of permanent or seasonal residents rally round them, defending one side or the other. The claim to expand the construction plan of Panormo assembles part of the businessmen, the local governing authorities, and those villagers who hoped to see their fields become building plots. On the opposite side stand the owners of small-scale tourist lodgings willing to promote quality tourism. This group of businessmen stands up for the classification of Panormo as a traditional village, which will automatically protect the community from any architectural interventions that threaten its traditional character. These people seem to be willing to achieve their goal by any means, by mobilizing the local population or by invoking the arbitration of the Archaeological Service. In some cases, the recriminations between those two groups became violent. Finally, the Municipality decided to put the issue to the vote and settled the matter through the Ministry of Culture, which granted permission to expand the village beyond the limits of the historical centre, which was declared scheduled.

This confrontation clearly illustrates the intrusion of external investors in local development and in the determination of the use of village territory. One more example that shows the claiming of use of the village space concerns the beach. The occupation of the already restricted beach space by the large hotels, exclusively for the needs of their clients provokes the hostile reaction of both villagers and small tourist business owners. On the other hand, the latter, who aspire to promote the traditional and cultural face of Panormo, have claimed through the founding of a cultural association an old flourmill, property of the farmers’ co-operative in order to restore and use it. The flourmill was renovated and transformed into a multi-cultural centre for the organisation



of musical and other cultural events by Greek and foreign artists, with the intention of upgrading rural life and widening the villagers' cultural horizons. This initiative was initially met with the opposition of some cooperative members and villagers who considered themselves excluded from any decision-making concerning their village's cultural life. On one occasion, the conflict led to aggressive reactions against an inn owner who was at the head of the cultural association. However, these are not the only cases of aggression between villagers. Violent actions of intimidation have also taken place between external and native tourist investors.

Another aspect of space appropriation concerns the cattle-breeders of the region who claim, by various interventions, both violent and non-violent, the use of community territory for pasturage and construction of stock-farm facilities. Except for the occupation of a hill that towers over Panormo, they do not hesitate to bring their flocks down to the village's residential area or to trample on private agricultural property. Panormo's residents hope for a peaceful settlement of these agitated relations through the development of tourism in the region.

The intense confrontations that exist in the heart of Panormo's society regarding the use of village space, the claims and rivalries of the residents, permanent or not, are explicitly reflected in the village's cultural life. Only a few years ago did the cultural associations of Panormo, which had remained inactive for many decades, begin to flourish again. Today, there exist twelve, out of which seven intend to ameliorate and promote the aesthetic and cultural aspects of the village.

Finally, the growth of tourism and the important changes that have taken place in Panormo's life and area, as well as the fervent confrontations among villagers, have motivated and strengthened the villagers' awareness of the cultural, architectural and historical wealth of their native place. Moreover, they have become aware of the rising demand for their locality's assets and they have started taking advantage of it. Furthermore, they have realised the need to preserve the local colour and to protect the cosy, familiar atmosphere in order to attract constant family-centred tourism.

## **TSEPELOVO**

Perched on the slopes of mount Tymphe, at an altitude of 1,150 metres, Tsepelovo is situated in the area of Central Zagori and is the administrative centre of the Municipality of Tymphe. The village is only

forty minutes away from the regional capital, Ioannina, while an easily accessible asphalted road network connects it with its neighbouring communities. Today, it is easy to reach Tsepelovo in any season, even in wintertime.

Approximately two hundred people permanently inhabit the village whose traditional occupation consists of livestock breeding and forest exploitation. Since 1990, mountain and rural tourism has also begun to develop. After the hard decades of demographic, social and economic decline that followed the important wave of immigration in the 1960s, towards the urban centres of the country and abroad, a brand new Tsepelovo seems to have risen, centering around the appreciation and exploitation of its natural and cultural heritage. The development of new activities and the reinforcement of traditional occupations have, especially during the last five years, contributed to the retention or attraction of village youth, which is currently working and living permanently in Tsepelovo. In the same manner, the village's natural and architectural environment has greatly been enhanced. In this sense, tourism demonstrates and somehow determines the new social reality that is being formed in Tsepelovo.

But let's start from the very beginning. The sporadic passing through Tsepelovo of a few mainly foreign travellers in the 1970s was replaced by a more massive arrival of mostly Greek families when in 1991 a big hotel of seventy beds opened in the village entrance.

At the outset, most of the villagers treated the advent of tourism with caution. This new activity, which at that time occupied only a minority of the population, seemed to offer a promising prospect, but on the other hand was still a delicate matter. In this first phase, while tourism was taking root in Tsepelovo, the villagers were divided into several camps.

Those who operated the first tourist lodgings, having no experience in tourism, confronted the continuous criticism and hostility of their fellow villagers. This situation pushed them into professional solitude and cast doubt upon their venture. Three perceptions can be identified among these amateur businessmen. The first, intending to make a 'small Paris' out of Tsepelovo, aimed at the development of services similar to the model of mass tourism. That is, rooms with modern furniture and equipment, including TVs to keep the visitors occupied, standardised breakfast and meals, collaboration with big tourist agencies. The second perception supported an alternative model of tourism more or less related to agrotourism, based on a personal contact between visitor and host and promoting the cultural and natural features of the region. That is to say, traditionally decorated rooms, meals based on local recipes, homemade

jam and sweets, touring and sightseeing in the region on bikes and horses, scouting excursions, participation in agricultural activities and collaboration with mostly foreign nature-worshippers and tourists. Between those two opposite aspects of tourism oscillated a few villagers who had taken the decision to enter the tourist business in order to build a couple of subsidized rooms-to-let and then bequeath them to their children as residence. Without having a clear attitude towards development, they made do with a few passing travellers, beginning though to form, little by little, their own clientele and perception of tourism. However, in the context of alienation that prevailed among those who worked in tourism, those people felt particularly isolated since they had a small number of beds to offer and no collaboration with the bigger tourist units.

The criticism that was launched against all those who held a tourist business in the village by their fellow villagers was mainly about the quality of services and goods offered, the high prices, the lack of understanding, collaboration and group effort among inn-owners, the intrusion of unfamiliar morals and habits in local life as well as in the growing disaffection among villagers in the name of ephemeral profit. Those who were left out in the field of tourist business, blamed the others for their businesses' isolation, for the fragmentation of the village society, for their preference of tourists to a local clientele, and, finally, for their reluctance to share information concerning subsidies and investing programmes.

To the villagers' criticisms were also added those coming from heterodimotes, who kept complaining about the changes introduced in Tsepelovo by the crowd of tourists.

At the same time, livestock farmers and the forest workers were concerned about the ascendancy of tourism, considering that the sudden turn in favour of this new activity would marginalise them in such matters as the financing of infrastructures and private investments granted by the Municipality. Taking into account that traditional professions, such as stockbreeders and forest workers, were until recently the foundation of the local economy, they expressed their frustration especially since they were a majority compared to those promoting tourism. In this context, they were even deliberately opposed to arrangements that were in favour of those who sought to take advantage of the tourist high season. To an extent, a certain lack of confidence felt by the majority of villagers concerning the survival of the tourist activity also contributed to the antagonism arisen between those who worked in tourism and those who did not. The latter thought that tourism might have been a passing fad that

would not have lasted. According to them, development efforts should have continued to support traditional professions in the first place. Besides, stockbreeding and forestry had been providing the villagers' income over a long period of time, whereas tourism remained an uncertain and low supplementary source of income.

Nevertheless, despite the antagonisms and difficulties, tourism has steadily and progressively gained ground and reputation, largely assisted by the subsidies of the Common Agricultural Policy. Both permanent and seasonal residents, heterodimotes and external investors, have found a way to develop tourist activity. Construction of new rooms-to-let continues to this day while there are already two hundred beds available, which are occupied on an average of three months per year, mostly during summertime and holidays. Alongside the renting business, grow other complementary tourist activities, such as taverns, souvenir markets and bars, while the local café mini-markets expand their clientele. At the same time, seasonal activities have flourished, such as tourist employees, waiters, trekking guides, sellers of herbs and aromatic plants, photo-artists, as well as the hiring of bikes and horses for trips up the mountain. The increase of visitors has also resulted in an important upturn of local products, thus helping to support livestock breeders and the local craft industry of woodwork and carpentry, also assisted by the construction and restoration of traditional houses in the region.

The above-mentioned developments have deeply affected the villagers' attitudes. Little by little, they have become aware of the multiple profits tourist development could bring to Tsepelovo while at the same time, they have renewed their bonds with the local traditions, culture and heritage of their native place. Furthermore, they have strengthened their sense of origin and belonging to Tsepelovo's society, contributing in this manner to the revival of collective activities.

However, since the upturn of the village's social and economic life, as well as the renewal of interest in the opportunities offered by Tsepelovo and the exploitation of its amenities, conflicts and antagonisms between permanent residents and the rest of the land's users seem to multiply and change nature.

The most important conflict within the village society exists between permanent residents and heterodimotes. The latter seem to appreciate their homeland once again and claim their right to intervene and participate in its development, either with the intention of investing in and making a profit out of tourist business, or by defending the protection of its traditional character among others (social, natural, architectural, etc.). They aspire to preserve its image unalterable, as fixed in their memories,

and seek, in the heart of its small society, meaningful and authentic communication between people, the type that is missing in city life.

Thus, while some heterodimotes open taverns, inns and lodgings, some others restore their family houses in the traditional local style, trim their hedges and show up whenever possible, even at weekends, in order to indulge in the countryside's peacefulness and isolation, in the village's natural and familiar environment, away from hasty town life. Those people are opposed to the crowds of tourists arriving in Tsepelovo and to the alterations caused by the development of tourism to the physiognomy and habits of village life. They don't cease to criticise the aesthetic changes made to the architectural environment, the noise, the lack of water and space or even the desire of permanent villagers to create a "new" village.

On the other hand, Tsepelovo's inhabitants express resent towards heterodimotes, considering that these "swallows" that fly away when the difficult season of winter arrives, spend their time mostly away from the village and return only for a few days, don't have the right to determine the villagers' fortune. This antagonism between heterodimotes and villagers is accentuated by the fact that heterodimotes seem to contribute little to the local development and to the everyday worries of the villagers when they arrive as 'conquerors' seeking to influence things according to their opinion.

However, we have to draw a distinction between heterodimotes who live in the nearby town of Ioannina and those who live far away, particularly Athenians. Those living in Ioannina are practically considered permanent residents, as they often visit the village at weekends and even during the week, thus participating actively in its social, cultural, economic and political life. Besides, they identify themselves strongly with the social group of permanent residents. What is more, having the privilege of living both in the town and in the countryside, they can easily perceive from a distant point of view a village's advantages. In today's context of re-evaluation of rural areas, the heterodimotes from Ioannina take several initiatives such as the re-establishment of the cultural association, brought into action by events such as the organisation of a local arts festival or the instigation of local population to grasp the opportunities offered by mountain tourism. Members of this group of heterodimotes are the Mayor, many town councillors, the postman, the primary school teacher and others.

In this hostile climate of conflicts between permanent residents and the Athenians, the people of Tsepelovo express their disappointment that, although the village does not have a newspaper of its own with the

everyday issues and news, the Athenian heterodimotes periodically publish a newspaper, which allows them to expose their points of view. As a villager's statement illustrates: *"This newspaper refers to the long-gone past and has nothing to do with the present reality of the village. Those people still live by the glorious memories of their childhood. They write about the wealth and the aristocracy, the manners and customs of a past society, even though they don't live there. In fact they are not at all familiar with the everyday life and issues of Tsepelovo today. It is totally unacceptable that they insist on preserving an image that no longer exists!"*

So, while the residents themselves re-discover and re-evaluate their village through the visitors' eyes trying to be the ones to make the crucial decisions that will determine its development, the heterodimotes and external investors see this as an opportunity to make a profit, intruding in local life in a direct or indirect manner. Thus, Tsepelovo nowadays has become a field of multiple interests, investments and expectations. These different aspirations related to the exploitation of the village, expressed by the permanent or seasonal residents of Tsepelovo, heterodimotes or foreign investors, young or old, through their conflicts and actions, determine the regeneration and development of the local social, economical and cultural life.

## CONCLUSIONS

Two Greek villages, one on the mountain, the other by the sea, helped us illustrate vividly the various different expectations, goals, investments, motives and interests that are manifested in their bosom regarding the demand and use of the rural space. The conflicts and antagonisms expressed between the different groups of space users, permanent or seasonal residents and investors, allow us to comprehend the new social and economic reality of the modern countryside. They also indicate the new functions attributed to rural space as well as the relations developed between the residents of the towns and villages.

Being smaller and mountainous, Tsepelovo preserves the low-scale investments of moderate tourism, which flourishes along with and strengthens the remaining traditional activities. The conflicts are low profile, clearly indicating however the way in which the village evolves. On the other hand, Panormo, being three times the size of Tsepelovo and located by the sea, oscillates between a massive and more family-centred type of tourism, while being at the same time a suburb of Rethymno and

the hinterland of Mylopotamos. The interests at stake in Panormo are big, so are the names involved and so is the tension of the conflicts taking place in it.

We could say that the development in both villages examined partly originates from the residents' change of attitude towards their village. In fact, this change is engendered by the influence that is exercised on permanent residents by those not living in Tsepelovo on a permanent basis – heterodimotes, external investors, visitors and tourists, even new inhabitants. Through this distanced look, they become aware of and appreciate the natural, cultural, and touristic potential of their village. Furthermore, we can make another distinction between villagers. On the one hand are those who, having lived away from the village for years, perceive its advantages – especially in relation to the needs expressed by modern society about taking up rural space – and thus try to exploit and offer its amenities to the tourist market. On the other hand, are the villagers who, having lived all their life in the village, have a hard time accepting the forthcoming changes and the new order and thus understand the new circumstances belatedly. However, from the moment that the local society becomes conscious and takes action, it claims its independence and stands up for the right to exploit Tsepelovo's resources and determine its development on its own. From that perspective, the external users of the countryside, including heterodimotes, appear to villagers as rivals with regard to the exploitation of the newly-discovered resources.

Although the interference of heterodimotes in the economic, social, cultural and political life of the Greek village has been extensively studied in the past, we would like to point out for one more time this important dimension of the Greek – or even Mediterranean – society. It seems very important to study more extensively and understand the role heterodimotes play, or could potentially play, in the development of the modern village, the evolution of the collective local life and the arrangement of the community's natural environment and residential space.

As we can see, the development of the two villages presented is directly and essentially connected to the development of tourism. Their boom reflects the continuously growing need for utilisation of the rural space that modern society considers authentic. This tendency goes along with the search for traditions, local architecture, customs, history and generally the resurrection of a glorified past. These exact elements are used commercially and are being properly promoted in order to satisfy the urban demand for rural qualities. However, being presented in this way is

more about a trendy exhibition of these customs and local traditions rather than a preservation and functional revival, aesthetically and culturally, of their essence. In creating this rosy picture, a vital role is played by the media –TV, radio and the press. They reveal an uncorrupted, folkloric image of rural society, trimmed by the values of a healthy and well-balanced life, as an antidote to hasty and anxiety-filled city life. It is the same image of a glorified past, which villagers often use, either to advertise and promote their village or to defend it against the changes brought by tourist development.

The flourishing of cultural associations in both villages also reflects the new interest in investing in and using the rural countryside. Furthermore, these cultural associations have been proved to be an ideal ground for rallying, taking action and expressing conflicts with regard to the use of rural space.

Finally, although the new social reality that is being formed in the villages appears to represent the loss of the once powerful and coherent rural community for most of the elders, it is gradually discovering a new balance. The revival of the long inactive cultural associations is evidence of this 'new' type of village that is being formed, as people with different origins and aspirations unite under a mutual goal: the pursuit of the same vision for the use and development of rural space.

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*SUBMITTED: MARCH 2007*

*REVISION SUBMITTED: MAY 2007*

*ACCEPTED: JUNE 2007*

*REFEREED ANONYMOUSLY*

**Eleni-Christina Sotiropoulou** (eleni\_hs@hotmail.com) is a Lecturer at the Technological Educational Institute of Crete (ATEI), 13 Capetan Yiorgi Str., 74100, Rethymno, Crete, Greece.

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<sup>i</sup> This paper was presented in Greek during the Vth Mediterranean Conference entitled “Tourism beyond the coastline: New Trends in Tourism and Social Organisation of Space”, Thessaloniki, 22-24 September 2005.

<sup>ii</sup> The administrative division of Rural Community has changed into Municipal Department since the application of the Kapodistrias law, in 1999, concerning the merging of rural communities into wider Municipalities.

<sup>iii</sup> ‘Heterodimotes’ are migrants, originating from the same village, who live elsewhere but often visit their native village, especially during summertime and holidays. Throughout Greek history, heterodimotes have always maintained a strong relation with their native land and in many occasions have favoured their village. This attachment to the homeland is expressed in several forms: massive donations, returning during vacations and summers thus reviving local life, participation in the local elections, etc. Associations of heterodimotes, massively founded all over Greece and abroad, symbolise until our days this strong feeling of local attachment to the community of origin. On the other hand, the villagers always sought to maintain these bonds with heterodimotes who, inhabiting big towns, have sought to secure their native village’s promotion.