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*Eleftheria Deltso*

E-article

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# SECOND HOMES AND TOURISM IN A GREEK VILLAGE

## A Travelogue

*Eleftheria Deltso*

Mid-July 2007, Friday afternoon, around 3:00 pm. We are at home in Thessaloniki, Greece, and we hit the road for Halkidiki, an area renowned for its beautiful coasts that Thessaloniki associate with summer vacations. It is a bright, sunny day, relatively hot – around 32° Celsius – and the road is packed with cars. A good number of them are trying hard to drive faster than the rest, to get wherever they want to go before the rest.

Fortunately, along most of this road, there is now a median divider that prevents passing in the opposite lane, thus reducing the number of accidents. A sign warns us: "Road under construction; work in progress." The widening of the road is meant to facilitate traffic in the summer. For winter needs the road is adequate, but not for summer traffic. Automatically anticipating a malfunctioning and incompetent government infrastructure, part of the dirty laundry of Greek nationalism (Herzfeld 1997), we grumble: "why do they [i.e., the state] always need to do such things in the summer?"

And then, as always, we wonder: Where are all these people going? How come the place doesn't "go under" with so many visitors flooding into it in the summer and even more during summer weekends? In a vain search for the "authenticity" of my personal experience, I recall with something like an "imperialist-nostalgia"<sup>1</sup> that when I was small, only a few people traveled to Halkidiki in the summer; that knowledge of the past gives me a sense of a paradise

lost. In the meantime, we get phone calls on our mobiles from family and friends who all ask the same questions: When did you leave? When do you think you'll get home? Should we have lunch or wait for you? When, after about an hour and a half, we finally arrive in Nikiti, our destination, everybody wants to know the same thing: How was traffic? How long did it take you to get here? Which route did you take? Was it really bad?

Halkidiki is a famous summer tourist resort area for Greeks and foreigners alike, a "classic" tourist landscape, simultaneously both product and producer of particular corporeal and other practices (Creswell 2003). Tourism in Halkidiki began in the late 1950s and early 1960s when a few Greek families from Thessaloniki started spending their summers, or parts of them, at the coastal villages of the region. They were then described not as tourists but as *paratheristes*, "summer sojourners".<sup>2</sup> Cassandra, the "first" of the peninsula's three fingers,<sup>3</sup> as people call them, embarked on tourist development earlier than Sithonia, the "second" or "middle" finger of Halkidiki where Nikiti<sup>4</sup> is situated. Even now, half a century later, the middle finger has the reputation of being a more pristine area, particularly when compared to Cassandra that was involved in foreign tourism, particularly of the package variety, relatively early.

In the early days, most summer sojourners would rent rooms in the homes of locals or, when people

had family origins in the village, they might stay with relatives. Very few people back then owned summer houses. For those who did, the common term to describe it was “villa”. “They have a villa in Halkidiki”, people would say, alluding to the upper middle-class status of the owners.

But things gradually changed. By the 1970s, the number of visitors had already increased, most of them Greeks, but now a few Germans and Austrians as well. This foreign tourism was later seriously affected by the war in the former Yugoslavia and it has only recently revived. The big tourist boom on all of Halkidiki started in the 1980s. Since then the region has been almost literally conquered by tourism, the majority of it from Thessaloniki, Greece’s second-largest urban center. By the late 1990s, Halkidiki became a desirable destination for tourists from previously socialist countries, but the main market remains Greek tourists and Thessaloniki. In the 1990s, acquiring a second-home “by the sea” became a widespread, if not collective, social value. Everyone started wanting one, and by now, in 2007, it seems have gotten their wish.

### Strolling through the Tourist History of Nikiti

Later on that day, we decided to take a walk up to the old church, in the upper part of the village, to enjoy the panoramic view, and then to stroll around the village as we walked down. When we reached the church, the sun was still up but slowly sinking into the bay. It was amazingly quiet up here, unlike at the busy coast. We could see the whole village; tile roofs on all the houses – a relatively recent mandatory regulation – interspersed amidst the green of the trees and plants in the yards. It offered a rather charming view, and I said: “one can still see why locals used to call Nikiti a *makrohóri* [long village]”. As the village unfolds, from its more mountainous older and higher part to the newer buildings at the coast, someone who knows the place can “see” time in space.

Once again, I was amazed at how large the village was, at least compared with how it used to be. Before the major expansion started, the village included only the upper, more mountainous part, a big section of which is now officially designated as an “his-

toric locus”. Only in the early 1950s did the village start expanding significantly “downwards” towards what is known as “the bus stop” and which for many years was the junction with the old country road. In the 1960s, new houses were scattered on the plain with a denser stretch at the coast. In the 1970s, the coastal plain and the area in-between were included in the town development plan, a result of which was the rather rapid abandoning of the older houses in the upper part of the village and the building of new houses on and toward the coastal plain. This process culminated in the 1980s, when the village acquired its characteristic shape: very oblong, but thinner in the middle. A quarter of a century later, the village does not just extend in an oblong manner toward the sea, but has become more and more round, and is currently expanding sidewise as well.

I look again at the view and, despite my frequent visits to Nikiti, I’m once again surprised by the changes that have taken place. I realize that what annoys me the most about the expansion of the village is that the vast majority of these buildings are meant to house urbanites who long for a second home close to the sea.

### The First “Summer Sojourners:” Accommodation and Everyday Life

My mother was born in Nikiti and spent her childhood there, but she lived the rest of her life in Thessaloniki. When my older brother and I were children, in the early 1960s, we would spend our entire summer vacation in “the village”. We didn’t go to my mother’s nice parental house, with its thick stone walls, in the “upper village”, as that part of the village was called then. For almost 15 years, our parents preferred to rent rooms in local houses that were usually quite literally “by the sea”. All we had to do was cross a two-meter wide dirt road in order to jump into the sea. It was very important for them to have such a place to spend the summer in.

The dominant bourgeois ideas concerning health dictated that children should swim a lot, and by renting a place by the sea, our mother could keep an eye on us. She herself didn’t enjoy swimming much, but was convinced swimming would make “children”



stronger and better able to face winter colds. Our parents believed that as we were learning to swim and dive, we would occasionally gulp sea water – and the sea iodine would, in a sense, “sterilize” the tonsils, since tonsillitis was such a common problem among young children. For them, the swimming/health discourse was part of the answer to the heated discussions back then over the correct medical treatment of throat infections: antibiotics or having an operation to remove the tonsils? I have internalized this discourse so well that every time I gulp seawater as I swim, I catch myself thinking: “Hmm! I may have fewer throat infections this winter!” Swimming and sea air were considered good for children’s appetites and my mother always hoped that swimming and playing around would increase my otherwise poor appetite.

I now realize our relatively tight daily schedule put in practice ideas about health and nutrition, combined with age and gender stereotypes. We would wake up around 8:30 or 9 am, have breakfast and then play with other children – summer sojourner and local children alike – until we would have “digested our breakfast” a few hours later and it would be warm enough to “go to the sea”. We would get our paraphernalia and run to play with our friends in the sea.

At the time, there were only a few places on the beach where swimmers would gather. They were few anyway. Parents, usually mothers during the week, would mostly stand in the shallow sea up to their chests, making swimming motions. Few knew how to swim then, particularly not women, but it was considered necessary that “we children” would practice and learn it. Older locals usually did not swim at all. It would only be on unusually hot days that local people would show up at the beach: an old man in a rather worn out bathing suit, a woman in one of those corset-like bathing suits, or, in the case of very old women who had never owned a bathing suit, in their negligee. The local children who lived at the coast, especially the ones who played with us, would join us to swim and play in the sea. Those whose fathers were fishermen were well-trained in swimming and diving. My mother used to describe them as “strong” and “healthy”.

Around 1 pm we would be called “out from the sea” for lunch in the front yard, under the tree with a view over the shimmering water. Then, despite our complaints, a midday siesta always followed. It would only be later, when we were teenagers, that we could negotiate the siesta and meet our friends in a shady place. Early in the evening, if the sea was calm, we might be allowed to go swimming again. Otherwise we would play with our friends, and get a small snack to eat while playing: I remember it was often some kind of sugary raw egg-yolk cream. When it got dark we would have dinner, maybe go for a walk, and then head to bed. The next morning it was more or less the same schedule.

Despite my nostalgia for this part of my childhood, I now detect an ideology in our practices that linked rural vs. urban hierarchical relationships with traditional vs. modern status. Back then I never thought of these “two months in the village” as something special. But for several years, we were one of the few families of summer sojourners in Nikiti that spent the whole summer in the village. Every month, or every two or three weeks, we would welcome some “seasonal” friends and would say good-bye to others until the next summer.

The reasons for the duration of the vacations were either the economic means of the family or the father’s leave of absence from his job. Even though my family was also middle-class, my parents preferred that my mother would stay in the village throughout the summer while my father, like some other fathers as well, would only come for the weekend. Back then, this meant only Saturday evening and Sunday. He brought all those goods, from food to toys, which one could not get in the village, and which distinguished us “summer sojourners” from the locals. Every Saturday, the arrival of the fathers was a source of joy for children and wives alike. Every now and then during the week, these temporarily single wives would wait at the only public telephone in the village to call their husbands, have a brief chat, and order what they needed from the city.

The village lacked electricity and running water in those days. My brother and I used to find fetching water from a public spring on our bikes quite enter-

taining, as well as lighting and hanging the oil lamps on the wall in the evening. We were the only family with an ice box, so several other summer sojourner families would ask my mother to keep perishable but “necessary” food for the children in it.

This lack of electricity and running water marked for us the exoticism and backwardness of village life, a lack of modernity that emphasized the distance between urban and rural life, and between affluence and poverty. But one day in the late 1960s, when we came for the summer, electricity and running water had been installed and the days of backwardness were over.

By the early 1970s, the number of summer sojourners had increased and a growing number of others, mostly German tourists, had appeared as well. More and more locals started building houses whose interior spaces resembled city apartments; these houses were soon in greater demand by summer sojourners. They provided amenities similar to what they had back home, things most urbanites considered “necessary” for their everyday lives such as taking a shower after swimming. That became a standard one could not live without, and it marked the level of progress or backwardness in the village. It was also – usually correctly – assumed that such amenities were an asset in advertising to foreign tourists: “Zimmer zu Vermietung mit Dusche” [sic] was a common sign in the village. In Nikiti back then, German and not English was the language of tourism. By the end of the 1970s, the first small summer houses appeared in the village, some of them built by old renters. Some Germans bought houses in the old village in the same era. The beginnings of Nikiti’s “second home” transformation had started.

### The Old Village

It was still daylight when we started on our way down, strolling around the narrow side roads of the Old Village. Just by looking at the old houses you can distinguish second homes from what are perhaps still permanent residences. The decorative style and the care lavished on them show, even to a not-particularly trained eye, the ownership status. By now, most of the houses in the “upper village” of the past

or the Old Village of the present are what one could call “traditional”: tile roofs over stone walls cleared of any old layers of plaster, with wooden windows, doors and balconies, with small and usually stone-paved yards decorated with plants in ceramic pots. The natural building materials, stone and wood, together with the stone-paved roads create a feeling of *traditionality* and a very nice aura.

Only a few years ago, these pretty, well taken care of houses now transformed into second homes, were either near-ruins, abandoned (as their local owners chose to build new houses in the newer part of the village), or deteriorating, though still inhabited by older people either unwilling or unable to restore them. Today, most of the houses still owned by locals have been restored in a way that makes visual references to traditionality, but avoids rusticity.

After several years of contesting the value of the “old”, as a signifier of lack of modernity and therefore backwardness, traditionality has become a positive value for locals. *Rusticity*, however, is acceptable only as display, and is meant only for tourist consumption, not for defining the contemporary local self (Deltso 2000b). Old houses where one can actually immediately see the differences in the form of restoration (if restored at all) can be found in the few houses inhabited by immigrants, either from the former Soviet Union (some of Greek origin) or from Albania. In their case, any restoration work they do, out of necessity or of taste, rejects *rusticity* and *traditionality* in favor of the affordability, practicality or even *modernity* of building materials like tiles, plastic floors, aluminum windows and doors, and plastic shutters.

The building regulations governing the kinds of changes one can make to the houses in the Old Village have resulted from its official designation (by the Ministry of Culture in 1987) as an *istorikos topos*, an “historic locus”,<sup>5</sup> following the formal application submitted by the regional curator of the Historic Conservation Office.<sup>6</sup> While this designation reflects the importance of terms like “tradition” and the “past” hold for nation-states, the abandonment of old houses and their purchase and restoration by non-locals made it necessary to establish special

protective legislation to preserve them. The designation of "Old Village" transformed the old houses in it into a limited economic and symbolic system of goods. Any changes in the Old Village now need to follow the regulations and recommendations of the Historic Conservation Office and the Committee for the Exercise of Architectural Control. The most eager to follow the regulations, it seems, are German and Greek urbanites who have transformed old houses into cottage houses, *exohika*. In a sense all the *exohika* owners in the Old Village, by virtue of their appreciation of the *traditionality* and the *rurality*, may be considered as one group. Most have higher education and are generally well-off.

But, as we stroll past such houses, I realize how these houses also reflect the attitudes of their owners toward locals and village life. On the one hand, taste and renovation practices of these urbanites or bourgeois house owners, construct a space and an image of an Old Village "as it ought to be" or as a "traditional Other". They are thus like those cosmopolitan selves who are "constructed in the space where cultures mirror one another", but whose surrender to the traditional Other is conditional "all the time know[ing] where the exit is" (Hannerz 1996: 103, 104).

On the other hand, this generalization is not supported with respect to the degree of the owners' contact to their village neighbors. An artist friend of mine has very close contact to her local neighbors and closely follows their lives, both for special and ordinary events. The same is true of a German family who restored their house mostly by themselves, and sought to develop good relations with their local neighbors, even if initially in broken Greek. In the case of some other Germans, however, their restoration and stylistic choices were limited to changes making the building inhabitable (e.g., transforming the ground floor from a stable and storage room into a living room and a kitchen; rebuilding an outdoor toilet into a bathroom). Their intention to keep the house pretty much the way it once was, clung to an exoticized and traditionalized past so much that their local neighbors saw them as peculiar and never sought to bridge the distance to them. In the case

of a Greek family who restored their house in a very sophisticated manner and emphasized antique aesthetics, their interaction with local neighbors relies very much on the higher social status of the man as a wealthy doctor.<sup>7</sup>

Can one tell the difference in everyday lives just looking at the outside of the houses? Without exception, there are tables and chairs where people relax in the evening in all the front yards, but how different is relaxation from a day's work and relaxing on vacation? While the evening activities of the urbanite house owners do not seem to stand out, or mark their separate identities, what is marked, and central, is the sea and free time. Bathing suits and towels hang on ropes, seashells decorate tables and windows, and candles are placed here and there in the yard in anticipation of a romantic evening.

But I can tell that these are not permanent residences by what is missing, because these yards do not show signs of any other activity. In the yards of permanent residents, paraphernalia from agricultural work lies around, especially unused bee-hives, since bee-keeping is one of the major economic activities in Nikiti. Yards to locals are not just part of an overall house decoration or design, though for local aesthetics it is necessary for tables to be covered by embroidered or even plastic tablecloth and decorated with a small pot of basil on top.

In the summer evenings, locals sip their coffees in the yard together with neighbors, and practice the old *soboro* habit of getting together for small talk and gossip, watching who passes by in front of their houses. Non-locals gather in their yards too, but I always get the feeling that they try hard to *avoid* watching the people passing by, as if to say out loud that it is none of their business, as if they are not a real part of village life.

While thinking about this, we come to the edge of the "historic locus" of the village. I look sadly at my grandmother's empty house marking one edge of the boundary. I worry about its future, so I walk away fast to leave it behind me.

### More Summer Houses and Everyday Practices of Vacationing

As we walk into the part of the village that occupies a space between “tradition” and “modernity”, still in the upper village but where most new houses have been built in a soft version of “neo-traditional” architecture, the village becomes livelier. Shops and offices create a kind of market area which stretches along the road heading down to the coast. Most houses in this area are owned by locals, though some summer houses have also been built at the edges of this part of the village. There, the town development plan includes open land which recently used to be fields, and that now stand uncultivated, awaiting those summer houses that will be built on them some day. Despite the tranquility of the area, particularly in opposition to the noisy coast, these former fields are not a prime choice for summer houses, and lie about a kilometer from the sea. A larger yard, a bigger house, or even a view of the plain and the bay are less desirable to most than a significantly smaller house closer to the beach. In the near future, however, this area too will join in the summer house building craze.

The housing density of the village increases as soon as we cross the intersection where the main road meets the one leading to the sea. Many cars are parked in front of the two big supermarkets, the pastry shops, the two pharmacies, the gas stations, the ATMs. Right behind the main road on the left, a big new church is being built to accommodate the needs of the seasonal population. The old village church is not big enough to accommodate everyone, particularly not during the major religious celebrations when non-locals attend as well. Several locals do not like the idea of the new church, as it stands there as the symbolic manifestation of how tourism dominates their lives.

The road to the coast here is a market area. Behind the first row of buildings, and on either side, further terraced house complexes are being built,<sup>8</sup> a result of the last expansion of the village development plan in 1994. This was the material manifestation of the *exohiko*, the dream of owning a second home by the sea; for those who cannot own an *exohiko* of their

own, locals now rent out apartments they own which offer similar amenities.

When the demand for land for summer houses increased in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the local government decided to revise the development plan to control the building practices of summer sojourners. The president of Nikiti, whom I interviewed in 1993, said the fear was that Nikiti would become like Kallikrátia, a town in Halkidiki lying closer to Thessaloniki, where many *afthereta*, small, often prefabricated, houses had been built without a permit on very small plots of land. The term *afthereto* signifies the owner's action to build as s/he pleases, not just without permit but actually by violating existing regulations.

When such illegal buildings started to spring up in Nikiti, the local government decided to revise the development plan so as to exercise some control over what the village would look like in the future. This was a disciplining action that aimed at control, and the grid structure imposed on the newer part of the village gave a normalized form to an area that used to be mostly vegetable and fruit gardens. Such “normalization” and the construction boom that followed made the area unrecognizable. Every time we walk around there, I try to nostalgically “see” the land I knew, the area where as teenagers we used to wander around, occasionally grabbing some fruit from the gardens. I usually fail.

My discomfort with changes to the village is not just with the spread of a form of summer vacationing that used to be exclusively middle-class, but with the establishing of a vacationing life style that ignores local life. The contemporary vacationing craze reflects not just an ideology of getting away from the city and from the summer heat wave, but also of having fun in a carefree and relaxed fashion.

A recent article in a Thessaloniki Sunday newspaper magazine<sup>9</sup> expresses this mind-set clearly. Titled “From volley to backgammon: Play”, the article starts as follows: “Thursday rendezvous at the beach... Plus traffic jam on the way to Halkidiki due to road construction. Plus heat wave at its worst. Oddly we don't care. *We go to play!*” The article teasingly talks about things people do at the beach: volleyball,

racquetball, building sand castles, playing catch, cards, backgammon, reading newspapers. That no skill is needed for such things is associated by the journalist with one of the most central aspects of summer holidays: flirting. So one has young women who are no good at throwing balls, but whose boy-friends are willing to play along as part of the summer's enjoyment; young men who "accidentally" throw a tennis ball near good looking young women in their bikinis, trying to get their attention.

Summer house owners, seemingly less carefree than young people, also display a relaxed attitude in all their daily activities, though they always prioritize what they consider the children's needs to be. Nowadays, breakfast is followed by going to the beach, laden with all sorts of paraphernalia: beach and sea toys for both children and parents, but also sun lotions with a high protection factor, embodying scientific arguments about the benefits and dangers of exposure to the sun. Sun-umbrellas and beach beds are often left out to mark the selection of "a good piece of beach and sea" and to make the twice-a-day descent to the beach easier. Lunch is followed by the mid-day siesta, and in the early evening the beach fills up with families once again. Unlike our parents' concerns about catching a cold if we swam late in the evening, nowadays one can see families swim until sunset. After all, doctors and specialists now emphasize how good it is to sun-bathe when the sun is not high in the sky.

Right before it gets dark, things are calmer on the coast, and the taverns, restaurants, pizza and gyro places only fill up later, when the *volta* (promenade) takes place. Between 9 and 11 o'clock at night, the coastal road, closed to car traffic then, is full of people. Parents with strollers, small children hanging on to parental hands, kids on bikes, crying children begging for a ride on one of the attractions, young men and women going to the beach bars.

The coastal road becomes a market of another kind at night during the summers: petty entrepreneurs, both legal and illegal, set up their merchandise to attract passers-by, especially the vacationers. Gypsies sell roasted corn on the cob, candied apples, cotton candy and cheap toys. Africans in "traditional attire"

sell wooden African art, but also "designer handbags"; an immigrant sells sandals, another one paintings, a Greek has an open-air bookstore. A few days earlier, a young woman appeared, selling handmade jewelry, a Czech man painted henna tattoos, and a group of Spanish-speaking Native Americans, in North American Indian attire, played Peruvian music.

The centrality of vacationing is also obvious in the terminology used. The designation *exohiki katikia* (country residence), also an official category for tax purposes, reveals a long-established urban and originally bourgeois hegemonic ideology. The very notion of *paratherismos* (summer sojourning), *paratheristiki katikia* (summer residence) and all other derivatives of the verb *paratherizo* (spend the summer) emphasize the centrality of summer in people's yearly schedule. One consequence, with a few exceptions, is that these houses are built with summer weather conditions in mind. Thus, though houses are often equipped with a fireplace (a "luxury" element, and, at the same time, part of an ideology of *rusticity*), the living room where the fireplace is located is usually relatively small. Given what are ordinarily dry and warm weather conditions during a Greek summer, people spend neither their days nor their evenings inside the house, but rather in the yard. Eating, reading, relaxing, socializing, or even watching TV takes place outside.

For that reason, one often sees a rudimentary or even a fully equipped open kitchen in the yard, including a basin equipped with running water, dishwashing facilities, a barbeque and frequently a gas stove. This second kitchen puts an ideology of cleanliness in practice, as people avoid going in and out all the time carrying kitchen utensils, and at the same time don't dirty the indoor kitchen with frying or grilling fish, meat and vegetables. The indoors of the *exohiko* is meant for sleeping and for those rare rainy days, when people move inside to protect themselves.

But, unless it is a sudden storm, when the bad weather lasts a bit longer, it is far more common that people leave and go back to their city apartments. That's exactly what happened last weekend when the weather forecast predicted rain and a drop in temperature. After confirming the accuracy of the

weather forecast, a long queue of cars formed on Saturday evening and Sunday morning, returning both renters and house owners back to Thessaloniki. Suddenly, in mid-summer, window shutters were closed, and plastic tables and chairs – unaffected by rain – were removed from the yards: these second homes are enjoyed only in good weather conditions.

### The “quid pro quo” Exchange System

When we reached the coast, we turned left<sup>10</sup> and walked toward where the last houses of the village used to be. As teenagers, we would cross to “the end” of the village to a then still pristine beach. We would walk 20 minutes or half an hour to swim without the presence of other people; at night we would get wood from an *arsanas* (shipyard) at the village boundary to make a bonfire, listen to music, and have a beach party. The *Arsanas* is now a restaurant by that name, the once pristine beach is full of people, beach beds, chairs, bars and the like, stretching another 2 kilometers to the end of the bay. The land has been incorporated into the development plan, and is full of terraced houses, so built to ensure each of them a view of the sea. They are generally rather small with equally small front yards. Still, this is the second home by the sea that urbanite owners could afford, and for locals, the best price they could get for their land.

In the opinion of some locals, and mine as well, the expanded village development plan was too generous. The construction limit for each plot of land was set relatively high, significantly raising the value of the land. Very few of the current second-house owners would have been able to buy a plot of land and build a house there were it not for one of the features unique to Greek construction. House-builders, as contractors, offer locals an *antiparochi*, which is a “quid pro quo” arrangement: in exchange for 25–40 percent of the space in the construction that goes up on their plot of land (i.e., a block of terraced houses), the landowner sells the builder/contractor the land and the right to build. As a result, the more that is built, the more profit both contractor and local (former) landowner make.

It seems thus in the interest of both not only to take full advantage of all building capacity of each

plot, but to maximize it in any possible way. Depending on the knowledge of the engineer, something that might appear in the building plans submitted as a basement may actually turn into a living room or a guest room; the attic may become a normal floor, and even if one is allowed to build only two stories high, one may end up having a three or four-floor building.

The disciplining practice of including the land into the village development plan and setting uniform regulations as to what can be built actually resulted in a different kind of uniformity: one dictated by the market logic of maximizing profit, through violating the very regulations that raised the value. This attitude is so deeply entrenched that in a discussion I had with a contractor, he could not see the point of building anything less than the maximum, even if it would provide a nice front yard, another marketable value. We held opposing views on land value: his was an *exchange-value*, mine was a *use-value* that “embodied non-commmodified dimensions of place as quiet enjoyment or feeling at home” (Rodman 2003: 212–213).

The value of these terraced houses, called *mesonéta* (from the French *maisonette*), depends on the size of the house, the location of the plot, and the type of construction. A look at the classifieds for Nikiti in a major Thessaloniki newspaper is quite telling. Terraced houses are far more common than apartments, while the term *villa* seldom appears, since these are usually sold by the owners and are quite expensive. The vast majority of houses advertised are brand-new *mesonétes*, either ready to be occupied or being constructed. The ads emphasize what they consider necessary information, but the word “luxurious” also often appears, both emphasizing and misleading about the quality of the construction. Even when “luxury” is not spelled out, the information provided clearly alludes to it: the quality of the windows, a security main door, provision for air-conditioning (but seldom for winter heating), a fireplace, a parking place, and outdoor barbecue facilities are standard information. The distinction between a “large yard” and an “independent yard” usually clarifies the status of private property: in its totality, it forms “land

appropriate for building”, but each of the *mesonétes* independently, and whatever land is associated with them, does not. The information that determines the value of the house more than anything else, though, is its location, and the key terms are the distance from the sea and the view.

### Theorizing an Individual Travelogue

At the end of the stroll through the village, I think about the complexity of my own position, at once insider, outsider, in-between tourist, second-home heir and anthropologist “of” the village. Have I, or can I, distinguish my stance, my status, my role, each time here?

I do not live in Nikiti, but I have spent a part of my life there. I have not only my own memories of Nikiti, but the memories of my mother’s childhood and my grandmother’s life as well: both continued telling me stories about their lives when they used to live there. These give more temporal depth to my knowledge of the village and more inside information, but also more feelings about it. When I did my Ph.D. fieldwork in Nikiti in the early 1990s, I became more acutely aware of the complexity of my standing: both privileged and deeply involved access and status. Today, I go there only when I can, though I realize that since I became an anthropologist, my perspective on, and experience of, Nikiti has changed and become far more ethnographic, whether I wish it to be or not. I will always be somehow at home, but on vacation as well, in Nikiti, while at the same time continuously doing fieldwork. Clifford (1997: 196), too, has said fieldwork is always a “mix of institutionalized practices of dwelling and traveling” and that the research traveler’s home exists in a politicized prior relation to that of the people being studied. My words here have tried to combine ethnography, tourism and locality, because none of my identities exists distinct and independent of the others. The ethnographic field is a habitus rather than a place, and “a cluster of embodied dispositions and practices” (Clifford 1997: 199).

### Notes

- 1 Rosaldo (1989) defined ‘imperialist nostalgia’ as the mourning of imperialists over the disappearance of what they have themselves transformed.
- 2 On the classification system of tourists see Deltsou 1995 and 2000a.
- 3 The term in Greek is *podí*, which literally means “leg”.
- 4 According to the last national survey (2001), Nikiti has a population of 2,883, of whom 2,502 are registered as permanent residents.
- 5 A place is designated as an ‘historic locus’ if it has remained largely unaltered in terms of architectural features, street plan, construction materials and techniques, along with overall visual landscape. The purpose is to ban the demolition of buildings and control changes. I have translated *istorikos topos* as ‘historic locus’ (instead of the more commonly used ‘historic site’), because Greek law draws a distinction between archaeological ‘sites’ (*archeologikos horos*), historic ‘loci’ (*istorikos topos*) and traditional ‘settlements’ (*paradosiakos oikismos*). I wish to uphold these categorical distinctions and the theorization of space by Greek bureaucratic institutions they imply.
- 6 For an analysis of the procedure and the rationale of the designation, see Deltsou 1995 and Deltsou forthcoming.
- 7 On the relationship between the diacritica of bourgeois distinction in the Old Village and the nation-state’s characteristics of uniqueness, see Deltsou 2000b.
- 8 To build a house in Nikiti, as in any settlement established prior to 1923, a minimum of a 300 square meter plot of land is required. The building may cover a maximum of 70 percent of the plot and may have at most two storeys and be 300 square meters large. This particular regulation legalized the old structure of the village, where houses had been built on small plots and in close proximity to each other.
- 9 *Aggelioforos* Sunday 12.8.2007, p. 42–44.
- 10 The harbor is located to the right; for the time being, it is almost only local fishermen who moor their boats there. Even though the expansion of the village includes that part of the village, and there is some building activity, its development does not parallel the one to the left; the sea there is not considered “good” since it is rocky and there is a pebble beach.

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