

Labour market restructuring and employment pathways: The case of a mixed community (Roma, non-Roma) in north-west Greece

SPYROS THEMELIS

This article draws on findings from an ongoing study on social mobility and education of Roma and non-Roma people in a provincial town in the north-west of Greece. My focus is on employment trajectories of individuals and the labour-market transformations this area underwent in the post-war years. The diverse experiences of the residents of the locale will be illustrated with respect to their employment and work histories in an intergenerational perspective. The aim of the article is to offer a renewed approach to the study of 'mixed' communities whereby dominant and marginalised groups, non-Roma and Roma, are examined together. This is done here in a way that takes into account both the subjective interpretation and objective conditions for both the Roma and the dominant group, male and female, as it argues against a theorisation of 'othering' Roma groups.

Keywords: Roma in Greece, economy, labour market, employment, education, social mobility

Introduction

This article explores aspects of employment and labour-market trajectories of Roma and non-Roma individuals in a community in the north-west of Greece. Drawing on findings from the qualitative component of a mixed-method study, it sheds light upon differential occupational routes and experiences of both men and women. Its scope spans three generations of respondents as it adopts a diachronic perspective in the exploration of the career histories of individuals (and to an extent their families). It aims to offer a renewed approach to the study of 'mixed' communities whereby dominant and marginalised groups, non-Roma and Roma, are examined together. At a more substantive level, it

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Spyros Themelis is a Ph.D. student at the Institute of Education of the University of London. Correspondence address: Department of Educational Foundations and Policy Studies, Institute of Education, University of London, 20 Bedford Way, London, WC1H 0AL. Email: sthemelis@ioe.ac.uk, sthemgr@yahoo.co.uk

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intends to go beyond conventional accounts of employment of Roma¹ which reserve a marginal position for inter-group differentiation along social class lines and often lead to a non-critical marginalisation and ‘othering’ of the Roma people. It argues that, in similar contexts, economic and employment differences between the Roma and the dominant group cannot be explained through synchronic accounts that are based on exploration of cultural or ethnic diversity which customarily reifies difference. These differences are explored here through employment trajectories which can only be theorised adequately if related to their socio-historical context. In this way individual accounts and experiences are not treated as anomalies of success or failure within a hierarchical and unequal social structure but are located into the web of the relations of production that cut across all domains of social and economic life.

The article is structured such that it follows three generations of participants through their occupational careers, while at the same time aspects of the structure of the labour market, the employment opportunities and the wider socio-economic conditions are unravelled.

1. Some aspects of the Greek economy and the labour market in the post-war years

For a big part of the post-war period era, namely, from 1949 to 1974, Greek development was characterised by rapid economic growth and accelerated industrialisation, despite the fact that Greece had lost nearly 70 per cent of her national wealth (including public infrastructure such as roads and bridges) during the the Second World War.² This notable progress was achieved due to foreign (financial and other) assistance and, partially, to domestic sources³ but it was brought to an end by the global economic and oil crises that broke out in the 1970s (Christodoulakis and Kalyvitis 2001). After 1974, for two decades, Greece experienced economic deceleration which started being reversed in the mid-1990s, when a renewed and steady wave of growth was brought about and a significant recovery in most of the economic indicators was realised.

In terms of employment (Figure 1), significant changes occurred throughout the post-war period, which reflect the drastic restructuring in the labour

1. The term ‘Roma’ is used here in order to avoid ‘Yiftos’ (Gypsy), which has a derogatory connotation in this part of Greece. Although the criterium for its selection is an issue of no minor importance, its elaboration falls outside the scope of this article.

2. In 1947, Greece’s GDP was only 75 per cent of what it stood in 1938 and it was exceeded only after 1952.

3. Indicatively, the Greek pace of growth between 1952 and 1972 was the highest among her European counterparts, by average 6.5 per cent per annum (Kazakos 2001: 186) while the average GDP rate of growth was by 62 per cent higher than that of the EEC countries (albeit per capita income was still lower than in the other EEC countries).

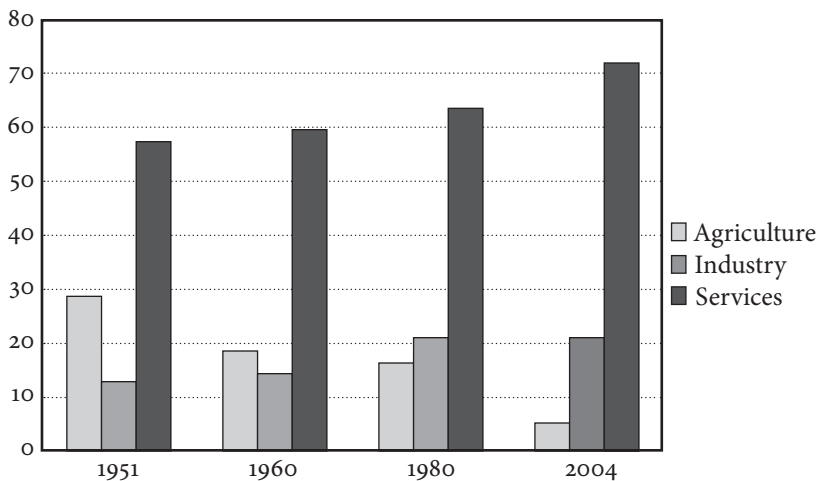


FIGURE 1. Per cent change in sectoral employment, 1951–2004. (Sources: Georgakopoulos 1991; Kollias et al. 2005; Gekas 2005)

market. Thus, agriculture, which had been the main pillar of the Greek economy both in respect to production output and labour-force employment, was now turned into a sector with secondary significance. The low productivity of the wider (primary) sector did not allow its workforce to be employed on a full-time basis and forced them to low living standards (Photopoulos 1985: 99). This triggered emigration to the big Greek urban centres as well as to the western metropolises and can account, to a large extent, for the demographic changes that occurred in Greece after World War II.

Although Greek industry played an important role in the general economic growth in the immediate post-war years, it never managed to become the cutting edge of the Greek economy. It could be argued that the industrial sector, after it had facilitated and marked the transition from petty commodity to the capitalist mode of production, started contracting and diminishing in importance, as the structure of the Greek economy and the developmental model that was followed did not allow it to play a catalytic role. Conversely, the service sector started (anew) over-expanding,⁴ which meant that the majority of the labour force was absorbed into activities with little productive capacity and transformative potential (such as in the public administration). This hypertrophy and parasitism of the tertiary sector is a common characteristic of the

4. The big size of the service sector, even in the pre-war II years, should not obscure the fact the Greece was still under-industrialised and under-developed. Unlike developed countries of the West, in Greece this expansion did not follow the transition from industrial (goods-based) to service (knowledge-based) economy.

‘peripheral’ countries (Mouzelis 1978; Photopoulos 1985: 94). Thus, while for the developed countries the expansion of services is associated with de-industrialisation and the consequent higher concentration of capital in the service sector, for the peripheral (and semi-peripheral) ones this is linked to their dependent pattern of industrialisation⁵ as well as to the perpetuation and expansion of semi-democratic politics that involve ‘clientela’ relations and patronage (or ‘meson’ as is widely known in Greece) and the lack of civic-society institutions. Overall, in periods of increased pressures in the labour market, the safety valve was either emigration (after the mid 1950s) or the entry of economic migrants (after the early 1990s). Emigration, which was high throughout the 1960s and 1970s, contributed significantly to economic growth due to remittances and decreasing labour supply. On the other hand, after the early 1990s, and for the first time since the beginning of the twentieth century, Greece was turned from a ‘sending’ into a ‘hosting’ country. Therefore, net immigration in the early 2000s accounted for 6 to 8 per cent of the overall population and for 9 to 12 per cent of those at working age⁶ (Kontis 2001: 181).

2. The study of the Roma in Greece

Up until recently, the interaction of the Roma with the dominant society was principally interpreted and studied in terms of their contribution to the wider economy, whilst the social aspects of Roma life were addressed with the intention of ‘exposing’ the problems they allegedly created for the dominant group(s) in society. Other studies (Sibley 1981; Williams 1982) examined the Roma in their urban context as one amongst many groups competing for strategic resources and a legitimate social identity. Such a conception that perceives different groups of the same society like cars in separate lanes of the road fails to recognise the contemporary context where these groups have been constructing their identity in dynamic, symbiotic and active ways.

5. ‘Dependency’ here has to be understood in the context of a country whose reconstruction requirements were funded by foreign powers which maintained some involvement in Greek politics even after the end of this period. In this vein, Greece became the biggest recipient of aid through the Marshall Plan (Zouboulakis 2005), which is not to be seen as a benevolent act of the big powers to a country that was on the brink of nearly total destruction after the Second World War, but mainly as an act of securing spheres of influence in a volatile and strategically prime location. This allowed the prolonging of political and economic dependency. The seven-year long dictatorship between 1967 and 1974 testifies to such a dependency as the big powers played a catalytic role in the developments that led to it.

6. The National Statistics Service of Greece (NSSG) estimated that in 2001, net immigration in Greece accounted for 7.3 per cent of the overall population. However, this estimate does not include the approximately 200,000 Greek Pontians and Greek Albanians, that is, ethnic Greeks who repatriated after the early 1990s, nor the ‘undocumented’ immigrants (see Petronoti and Triandafyllidou 2003 for difficulties in determining the exact number of this type of migrant).

In respect to the Greek Roma, the attention they received grew in momentum after the 1990s which is a period when the hitherto national and ethnic homogeneity of the Greek society, which in any case ‘was more a declared goal and less a depiction of the social reality’ (Markou 1997: 57), started to be challenged. Furthermore, this period coincided with rapid socio-economic and demographic transformations (see section 1) while the launch of the discourse on multiculturalism in Greece which growing in impetus. Within this context, the thus far invisible Roma appeared on the academic, political and social agenda. Irrespective of these developments, the way they were studied (or addressed politically) was mainly in ethnic or cultural terms, with the motivating concern being the ways in which they should be integrated or included into mainstream society (Pavli and Sideri 1990; Vasiliadou et al. 1990). This approach has resulted in the Roma people’s class position being invisible (Dousas 1997) while concerns about the recognition and acceptance of their difference and a particular focus on identity issues have been given considerable attention (Lidaki 2000; Vaksevanoglou 2001; Gotovos 2002). The Roma, then, have been examined mainly in isolation rather than in relation to the wider society of which they are an integral part. This lack of balanced investigation of the ways that class, culture/ethnicity and gender intersect can significantly limit the possibility of critical theorising. Although the scope of this article falls outside the exploration of these issues *per se*, it will nevertheless aim to provide an account that treats the Roma as active agents within a set of given structural conditions. In other words, it will treat class, gender and ethnicity/culture as a ‘dialectically mediated constellation of totality’ (McLaren and Farahmandpur 2005: 17).

3. The research

The accounts of the stories of the research participants that will be presented here derive from a study that aimed to develop insights into the social mobility experiences of individuals (and families)⁷ in order to elicit the multiple aspects of such a complex phenomenon and its interrelated processes. Unlike the thus far dominant approaches to studying social mobility, which have largely overlooked the experiences of those researched (Erikson 1983; Goldthorpe 1980; Breen 2004), this study approached the experiences and subjective understanding of the research participants through critical ethnography,⁸ which ‘can allow

7. As Bertaux and Thomson pointed out, ‘individuals are embedded within the family, occupational, and local contexts’ and occupational choices, aspirations, strategies and decisions ‘are as much a matter of family praxis as individual agency’ (1997: 7).

8. ‘Critical ethnography’ implies that the researcher will use all available means ‘to make accessible—to penetrate the borders and break through the confines in defence of—the voices and experiences of subjects whose stories are otherwise restrained and out of reach’ (Madison 2005: 5).

a degree of the activity, creativity and human agency within the object of study to come through into the analysis and the reader's experience' (Willis 1977: 3). The occupational experiences and memories of those studied; the power relationships that operate within the specific community; the multiplicity of ways in which the latter are constructed and reproduced—these are at the core of the analysis that ensues. What follows, then, is modelled on the original research design itself, which investigated both Roma and non-Roma individuals and families, since the dynamics of power and hierarchical relationships within which they operate is of major importance in relation to their location in the labour market and a determinant (though not the only one) of their occupational pathways. Moreover, both women and men are given a 'voice', or rather, a stronger voice, through selected extracts of their stories.

The research was based on observations and semi- (in some cases even loosely) structured interviews with 40 individuals. Twenty-eight one-to-one interviews were conducted and six interviews with couples. Participants were sought to be men and women as well as Roma and non-Roma, their proportion in the sample reflecting the actual ratio in the research locale.⁹

In line with the intergenerational character of social mobility inquiry, selection of participants also aimed to include the three age groups that this study was interested in: the older age group, roughly those born in the interwar period whose labour-market experiences would therefore start in the 1940s; those born in the 1940s, who would embark on their occupational journey in

TABLE 1. Research participants by gender, ethnicity and age group

Age group		Ethnicity		
		Roma	Non-Roma	TOTAL
Younger	Male	1	7	8
	Female	0	3	3
	TOTAL	1	10	11
Middle	Male	2	8	10
	Female	1	3	4
	TOTAL	3	11	14
Older	Male	2	6	8
	Female	3	4	7
	TOTAL	5	10	15

9. In spite of this commitment, this was not achieved in relation to women. This was redressed partly by extensive observations and informal conversations with many women, which do not figure in this article.

the late 1960s; and those born after 1960, who are currently the most active in the labour market. The breakdown of the research participants is set out in Table 1.

It is worthwhile pointing out here that the main research used a mixed-methods methodology, whereby the qualitative material referred to above was complemented by a survey that was conducted in the same area and yielded valuable information on patterns and trends of intergenerational social mobility and illuminated some of its core aspects (i.e. rates of vertical and horizontal mobility, the extent and tenets of exchange and structural mobility and so on). This latter part, though, will not be presented here as it is mainly intra-generational mobility that I will deal with in what follows.

4. The research site

The research site, Protopi,¹⁰ is an atypical case as far as its Roma inhabitants are concerned. Although for most Greek Roma groups there are references, traces and/or memories of their advent to the places where they reside, for the specific group no such indication (of their arrival) exists. In other words, their autochthonous status cannot be contested since their presence in this area is historically linked to the locale itself. There is no more evidence of historical patterns of movement for the ancestors of today's Roma than of any other section of the local population. Invariably, the Roma still live in neighbourhoods where the non-Roma are underrepresented or absent altogether although there seems to be an increasing tendency for mixed neighbourhoods. At present, the proportion of the Roma is approximately 15 per cent of the total population,¹¹ which is somewhat lower than the early and mid twentieth century.¹² Although in the late 1920s all the approximately 700 families of the town, both Roma and non-Roma, had an equal share of land due to a statutory decree,¹³ by the early 1950s a visible though not extensive differentiation was discernible between land owners and daily-waged land workers. In the immediate post-war years,

10. The name of the locale and the names of all research participants have been replaced with pseudonyms for issues pertaining to protection of the anonymity of the participants and the confidentiality of research conducted and the issues discussed.

11. This raises issues pertinent to fertility and mortality rates of the Roma and the general population. As the investigation of this aspect is still ongoing, tentative findings suggest that Roma families tended to be larger up until the beginning of the last quarter of the twentieth century.

12. The demography of the area, as well as that of many parts of Greece, has been significantly transformed from the early 1990s onwards, when Albanian immigrants started arriving in large numbers. According to an OECD economic survey of Greece (2005) '[t]he inflow of immigrants during the 1990s was large, raising the share of foreigners in the population to over 10% and increasing the labour force by between 5 and 10%'.

13. A statutory decree issued in 1929 made provision for equal land distribution for all the residents in the area. All residents were entitled to (potentially) arable land and land for dwelling. However, a big part of the former became arable only in the 1950s.

the wider area surrounding Protopi was still known for its hard working conditions, late industrialisation and limited opportunities for occupational and social advancement.

From among other avenues of social mobility, in the following sections I will explore mainly that of occupation, though references will be made to marriage through the accounts of a selected number of the 40 participants¹⁴ that were interviewed. Since space limitations do not allow for trajectories of all those researched to be conveyed in this article, each age group is represented by the life-course mobility and career movements of four individuals: two men and two women, each coming from either group (Roma and non-Roma). In other words, I will map out the trajectories and mobility experiences for each one of the cells that appear in Table 1 through selected, though not representative, respondents from each category.

5. 1948–late 1960s: from petty commodity production to free-market capitalism.

In 1928, the majority of the Greek population (67%) resided in villages and small provincial towns with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants. Moreover, 53.2 per cent of the economically active population were employed in agriculture and animal husbandry (Seferiades 1999), while the division of labour was relatively simple. In Protopi, the entire economic production was based on peasantry while employment outside of it was rare. The production unit was the household and, as is usually the case in relation to agrarian communities (cf. Franklin 1971), there were two kinds of asset a family could possess at the time: a few acres of land or/and livestock. Hence the family was engaged in ‘petty commodity production’ which for most of the time until the Second World War has to be seen as a holistic system, as a mode of production in itself. All members of the household would be occupied with the farming activities, with a further division of labour operating across the gender divide (more of which to follow). Conditions were exceptionally hard as it was a very labour-intensive occupation while working hours stretched from dawn to dusk and the peasants were widely exposed to weather adversities and other unforeseen factors (for instance, the flooding of the plains resulted in very poor or no harvests at all during the Italian invasion and the German occupation (1941–45), which further deteriorated the living conditions and claimed a high toll in the lives of many locals). Thus agricultural production, such wheat, corn, maize, oats and later on—that is, after the war—also tobacco, was mainly reserved for family

14. These interviews yielded information about a much larger number of residents, since the respondents disclosed information about all members of their (nuclear) family, their parents, siblings and sometimes about their close relatives, that is of the extended, kin family.

use and in order to provide the means of subsistence though barter was not entirely absent.

Men

The family economy was tightly related to that of the locale while its structural function was integral to the structure of the local labour market and indeed to the web of social structure that was evolved nearly *in toto* around agriculture. For land has to be seen not only as the main means for the household subsistence but also as a mechanism in the participation in the social life of the community. The two major social events of the year that would mark the beginning and the end of the agricultural season were attended by everyone while the same would be the case with weddings, which were open to all the community. Kinship ties regulated and shaped social relations but ownership of land and livestock (the vast majority of residents in Protopi owned both) would also qualify individuals to participate in networks of solidarity.

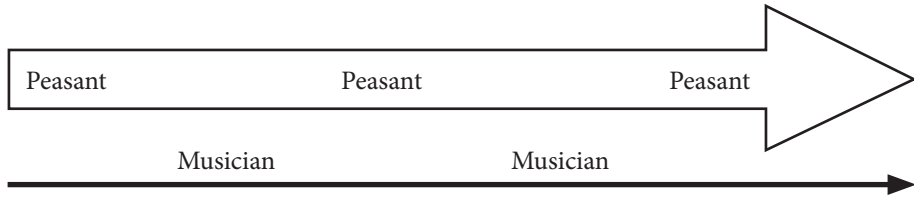
This, though, does not suffice to portray the social structure in Protopi—or for that matter any area with similar characteristics—as an internally undifferentiated one. Furthermore, a similar treatment of peasantry as internally undifferentiated, self-sufficient, consumer-labour group is equally erroneous (for such an account see Chayanov's (1986) analysis of peasant society).

Differentiation, no matter how extensive or otherwise, is to be attributed to economic and social processes in Protopi. Thus, some people who were entrusted with the entertainment of the locals in these social occasions described above would hold a parallel to peasantry occupation, that of the musician. This was customarily a Roma activity which was passed down to the next generation and would thus stay in the Roma family. Even in the early post-war years, when the local labour market was enriched with new occupations and opportunities were emerging, the Roma would often retain their traditional occupation, such as musician. Bacchus was a peasant throughout his life though to the locals he was known as 'Bacchus the clarinet player'. His father, also a peasant, taught him the art of music and Bacchus, together with his brother and two relatives, formed a band that entertained the audiences in open festivals, weddings and other family or community gatherings. Quite often this would be a 'dirty' occupation that conferred little respect to those who practiced it and many risks:

Well, in some areas we wouldn't dare go and play as a band. There were fights. Some [musicians] got shot. Now people behave better... there's more respect. (Bacchus, male, Roma)

For a meaningful consideration of Bacchus's occupational trajectory we need to take into account his wife's occupation, too, as well as the contribution of

the other three family members to the household economy. Thus, up until the transition from petty commodity form of production to the free-market economy that brought opportunities for the locals, the whole family was occupied in peasantry while later (roughly in the 1960s) Bacchus's offspring embarked on different careers (full-time unskilled worker in a factory in Germany and part-time cleaner) while he himself and his wife remained in peasantry. At the same time, Bacchus's music activity was turned from hobby with no secure rewards (material and symbolic) into an established part-time job, invaluable for the supplementation of the family income. This can be depicted as follows:¹⁵



While Roma men in the older generation had limited alternative sources of income supplementation, their non-Roma counterparts seemed to be faring better. Especially vis-à-vis the immediate post-war years, which saw an increase in non-peasant occupations, the non-Roma would have easier access to the more rewarding and profitable routes to occupational and social advancement.

A crucial factor that accounts for much of this differentiation relates to land and originates in the early twentieth century. For the redistribution of land in the late 1920s did not result in equalisation of material conditions at a stroke. This has to be attributed to demographic, rather than purely economic, reasons. Hence, while in the first years after the land redistribution, families with more children than the local average (i.e. more than three children) were in a better situation—as they could secure higher labour input and concomitant output production—within the course of one generation this was reversed. Thus, large families suffered more from land fragmentation since it was divided among more children (probably even more pronounced in families with more boys). It must be noted that it was the Roma who experienced land fragmentation sooner and to a greater extent than the non-Roma. What is more, the value of land was kept at very low levels since the free-market mechanisms had not yet penetrated the economic organisation of Protopi. Instead, then, of waiting for their land to fragment and devalue further, not only as

15. The upper line represents the main occupation(s) of the individual in the chronological order in which they were held. The thin one below it shows the parallel occupations. A shorter line indicates that the secondary jobs were held for fixed periods of time while an intermittent line implies interruption of occupation (main or secondary).

a means of subsistence but also of exchange, many Roma would sell it out to non-Roma families. With the technological innovations that were introduced from the 1950s onwards, production increased and working conditions improved substantially. Moreover, at that time, land had increased in value much more than its owners had anticipated twenty and thirty years earlier when they sold it.

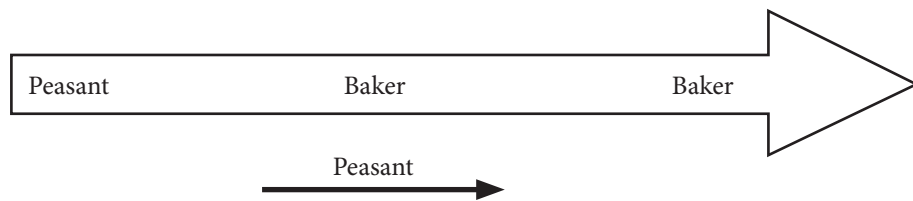
It is through this prism that we can understand the emergence of the division in the means of subsistence and production that would ensue in Protopi thereafter. This can give us an explanation why many Roma would sell their labour for ‘a plate of food’ and/or very little money, while others would remain land owners. Pantelis’s account offers valuable insights:

The Gypsies had large families so when land was given out theirs got soon portioned. Many of them were forced to sell it to get by because they were the poorest. In the 1950s they were in inferior jobs; like shepherds, dustmen and other manual occupations [...] They’d work on the land and get very, very low daily wages. The others [the non-Roma] wouldn’t; everyone had their own private land, so they’d work on their own. Generally, it wasn’t common here to work as a paid land worker. (Pantelis, male, non-Roma)

Solon was a non-Roma contemporary of Bacchus. He started his life seemingly from the same starting point: his entire family were peasants. Family production, as in Bacchus’s case, was destroyed during the war while Solon, as the head of the household, could not contribute to the family economy since he was serving in the Greek army (like Bacchus) for three years. While it appears that the two men had a common start in life, the rest of their career presents palpable differences.

Despite the fact that peasantry was not used for surplus extraction or capital accumulation, Solon and his family were hiring labourers (usually local Roma) for their fields. This would allow the family to expand production and to improve living conditions.

However, it is in the post-war years, when the economy offered more opportunities for occupational advancement, that Solon’s trajectory starts seriously to divert from people like Bacchus. Thus, with the limited capital his family had accumulated they opened a bakery, which, within the next few years, would become a profitable business and allow the whole family initially to retain some peasant activity as a secondary source of income (now with increased hiring of workers) and eventually to abandon it altogether.



The differences between this type of trajectory and the one we examined above in relation to Bacchus pertain to the capitalisation of opportunities by people in the older generation but also to the transmission of opportunities to their offspring. Thus, Solon's children abandoned peasantry sooner than Bacchus which in itself led them to turn to other alternatives such as (tertiary) education or get married in the city and not having to work at all. More of this, though, will be presented in the next section. Now I shall turn my attention to the different experiences of women in the older generation and their occupational trajectories.

Women

Women's contribution into the economy of the community and that of the household was significant:

All women were working in peasantry. The woman was a hero, in the sense that she was working much more than the man in these days. (Phokion, male, non-Roma)

As far as women's social position and structural location is concerned, this is closely tied to that of men: either their fathers' before marriage or their husbands' thereafter (a finding which, to an extent, is consistent with similar ones in mainstream social-mobility research; see Goldthorpe 1980; Breen 1995).

However, in terms of their own mobility experiences, this differs significantly from those of men on a number of counts. In nearly all interviews and informal discussions I carried out with women older than 50, their contribution inside and outside the household was equally emphasised. In their narration they did not make a distinction between work in the public and the private domains as they comprised their unified occupational realm, a conterminous space where their giving of their labour was the common denominator and, in more than one way, would play a role in the construction of their social role as women. More often than not domestic labour was emphasised in women's narration as much as their other labour (i.e. peasantry), which points to the integral relationship between women's domestic work and that in the labour market (Dex 1987). Although such a consideration has been largely neglected by mainstream social-mobility research, the participants' emphasis demonstrates its significance as it can offer us valuable insights into the gender division of labour and the ways it mediates and determines women's class destinations and overall social mobility.

Regarding women's occupational trajectories, they have to be examined both within the boundaries of the household and in relation to those of men as well as vis-à-vis wider community and social exchanges (including marriage) and family practices (i.e. dowry).

For a woman's future was shaped by wider family strategies to improve their living conditions and life opportunities. While a family's predilection would

favour the birth of a boy, who would be able to expand the family tree and add his labour capacity to that of the household, a girl was not equally recognised for her hard work. This was due to the widely held belief that female work in the household was a given, a major tenet of the gender division of labour in general, while her work in peasantry was considered as minor help compared to the putatively more physically strenuous work that a male could undertake.

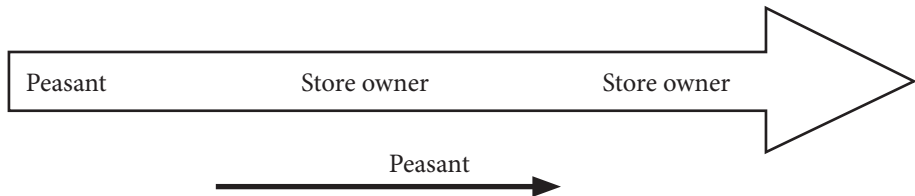
Moreover, the girl would burden the family with dowry costs. For marriage cut across social relations and the relations of production. Its importance spans social, personal, familial, economic and other spheres. Apart from securing the reproduction of the family, which was vital at the time of ubiquitous poverty and child labour, it also acted as a mechanism of social 'exchange', as leverage for economic transactions: as marriages were predominantly arranged by the parents (though rarely forced), certain partnerships were allowed to foster while others could never materialise. On the woman's side, the guarantee for a good match was her dowry. Dowry had many functions in the social universe of rural areas such as Protopi for the better part of the twentieth century. It carried symbolic as well as practical value. Symbolic in the sense that it validated the bride's-to-be worth as a good housewife who was aware of the needs of her new household and vigorously sought to address some of them (the dowry invariably consisted of fabrics, linen, duvets and pillows, which she would make herself, and other household necessities but it could also include livestock, golden coins and money). Moreover, having a sizeable dowry was proof that the family was serious about their daughter's marriage as preparation would have started long before the wedding arrangements. The practical value of the dowry consisted in the usefulness of the items it included and in their exchange and material value. Livestock, for instance, was a valuable asset in the new couple's household planning and production capacity while money could prove precious at meeting their first needs.

The socio-economic considerations had a crucial role to play in any marriage arrangement. Families anticipated that with a good marriage selection their children (especially their daughters) could secure a better future. The daughters, when married, would usually go and live with the groom's family while the sons would either stay in the parental house (especially the elder son) or very close to it or they would move into a different location (due to lack of space in the parental house but also to seek better employment prospects). In many cases, though, marriage was also a successful means of escaping poverty and the bleak prospects of peasantry as well as of improving the family's prestige and social status, in case the groom's family was more prosperous, had a good reputation or lived in the nearby city (or, generally, in an urban area).¹⁶

16. The reasoning here is obvious: those who lived in the city were not peasants, thus more prosperous than people in Protopi! In other words, no matter one's occupation, if it was not in peasantry it would be a much easier and more acclaimed one.

Acantha's story clearly encapsulates this practice. At the time of the interview in her late 60s she could be considered to be in a more advantageous position than most women her age who were still in peasantry. Her parents were farmers and ran their own livestock farm for domestic production. Through her marriage, her life and working conditions improved dramatically due to the property her parents-in-law possessed. She left peasantry and, together with her husband, they opened a small store which they could adjust according to the local labour-market demands (very small in the beginning due to limited availability in investment capital, then expanded in the 1980s and 1990s and finally, shrank in late 1990s when competition grew). The availability of property and investment capital allowed for the transition from peasantry into self-employment to be less risky an endeavour and with better returns and prospects than it would have been for other locals. This, though, did not free her from the domestic responsibilities. Family capital from her in-laws could offer a better occupational career and a more secure future for Acantha and her family but it could not reverse the sexual division of labour within the household. This is not only related to the economic and material conditions but chiefly to cultural and historical values, norms, expectations and traditions:

When my husband died in 1993, I kept the store on my own. Ever since I have been working here [shows the store], I managed to get my children married and whenever I can, I help them [financially]. But for many years, I raised my children with my mother in-law. I'd spend half the day with the kids and half the day on the land. Later on I also had the store to look after. At some point, thank God, we left the crops so I'd just be in the store and the rest of the time with the kids. (Acantha, female, non-Roma)



During the 'agricultural period' there was no big differentiation in the division of labour between Roma and non-Roma women. Roma women would inescapably assist in the family activities outside the household but would be entirely responsible for the ones inside it, too. In cases where families were bigger than non-Roma families, Roma women would be burdened with additional workload. There was one area, though, where Roma women had a clear disadvantage over females from the dominant group. This refers to marriage, which, together with immigration, was probably the only route available to women of Protopi to escape poverty and achieve upward social mobility. Hence, Roma families were much more restricted in their daughters' marital

choices, as inter-marriage with a non-Roma family was socially undesired. This was not so much to do with Roma practices to maintain homogeneity, cultural particularity and other distinctive attributes as often the case with Roma groups (see Okely 1983; Casa-Nova 2007) but it was mostly an enforced practice as a means of securing the 'purity' and homogeneity of the dominant group. While socially mixing with the Roma was tolerated to some extent, any family ties, and especially through marriage, were unacceptable. In this vein, endogamy has to be seen as a mechanism exercised by the dominant group to maintain the 'ethnic' boundary and seal the reproduction of social relations along these lines. This reduced the chances of Roma women from escaping peasantry and pursuing careers in other sectors of the economy, as in the case of Acantha.

Calliope, a Roma woman also in her late 60s, stayed throughout her life in peasantry while in her limited free time she would work as a hairdresser in a makeshift studio at the back of her flat, offering her services mainly but not exclusively to Roma women. Her parents were also peasants and her only alternative route to a different occupation and social advancement could come from her husband. Despite the fact that he started life as a peasant, after the war the whole family embarked on a parallel occupation which would soon turn out as a very high-risk and low-profit one. They launched a brick- and stone-processing unit which relied entirely on the manual labour of family members and very low investment capital as there was no equipment involved while the land was privately owned by the family. Not only was this insufficient to provide the family with a good supplement to their main income from agriculture but they soon had to shut it down as it increased their workload substantially. Discrimination against this specific Roma-run business and *de facto* exclusion from the labour market by the locals is a scenario that cannot be completely ruled out—though other factors may have played a more crucial role (location, quality of services, and so on). Eventually, Calliope and the rest of her husband's family had to return to agriculture. Her account is redolent with alternatives that never came about, while her occupational trajectory is equally revealing of the differential pathways available to Roma women:

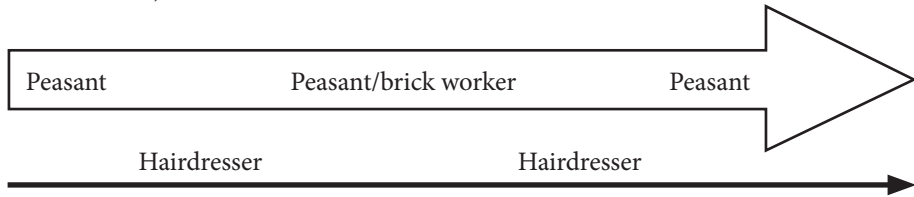
A: I was a peasant like my father was but I was also an amateur hairdresser. I was working really hard. I'd also work with my father in-law, in a very manly and very tiring job [cutting stone bricks]. Well, I did everything. Growing tobacco, wheat, corn; all that was manual work. I'd also come home to serve ladies who'd want to have their hair cut. I didn't have time to rest. In the night I'd do all the domestic stuff [cleaning, washing up, etc.].

Q: Did you choose any of these jobs?

A: It was compulsory. Since I had no occupation I had to get a job to get by.

Q: Would you like to have had the chance to do something else?

A: I would but it didn't happen. I'd like not to have been all day long deep inside the water when going to the crops and do all the heavy work. Yes, I would but how? (Calliope, female, Roma).



6. Early 1970s–mid 1990s: Economic restructuring and ‘education sponsored’ mobility

With the dominance of the capitalist mode of production, an array of new occupations was added to the simple division of labour in the hitherto peasant economy of Protopi. The sector that triggered employment changes and assisted the flourishing of new occupations was masonry and, more broadly, house construction. While Protopi was undergoing socio-economic transitions in the immediate post-war years (between 1948 and the early 1960s), its labour market and occupational structure started to change gradually. This coincided with the emergence of two crucial factors: the entry of money and real capital into its economic engine and the expansion of the service sector. The former was heavily derived from remittances from the emigrant population, the latter from endogenous changes in the local¹⁷ economy, labour market and employment structure. For apart from the cumulative advantages gained when remittances flowed into this hitherto un-developed area, they also triggered changes in the relations of production, the division of labour and the social character of the place. In agriculture, remittance-derived capital was often converted into ‘real capital’ for the purchase of equipment and machinery that could reduce the production cost, improve and modernise production. More significantly though, it was invested directly in house construction, which galvanised the local economy. Hence, externally derived money allowed the locals to reconstruct their dwellings and gradually to replace the rudimentary pre-war constructions, which were typically based on readily available local material and were built by the occupying family (usually in its extended form) and their

17. ‘Local’ is used here to refer not solely to Protopi but also to the wider area surrounding it, that is, the broader geographical area that includes all nearby villages and small towns as well as the main urban centre in near proximity, which was the main administrative and economic centre that exerted a big influence on all other settlements within close distance (less than 100 kilometers).

neighbours. Thus, thatched or sun-dried dung and cane walls with thatched roofs for the poorer and sun-dried brick walls for the better off were started being replaced with modern houses (with stone walls and tiled floors and from the 1960s onwards with the use of brick and cement).

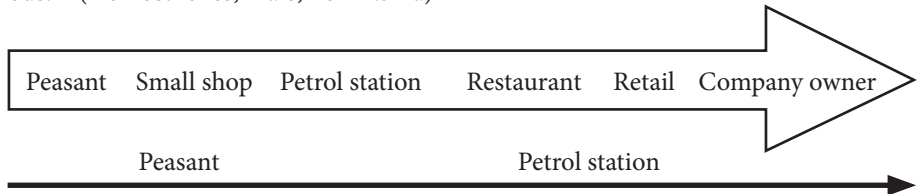
Men

In order for the new construction requirements to be met, labour force was needed or, more precisely, skilled labour force. The effects of the growth of the specific sector (masonry) were multiplying in the local economy especially when demand was augmented.

Demosthenes and his wife changed occupation a lot until they settled in an ever-expanding and extremely successful business. They started from peasantry but land was not enough to secure stable returns and they decided to take the risk and open a small corner shop which they kept for a few years while at the same time maintaining considerable part of agricultural activities. Rapid construction in Protopi, investment in roadworks, development of the nascent transportation system and the exit from the war furnished them with optimism to take yet another risk and open a petrol station. Owning land in a key location in Protopi was an advantage that they made maximum use of. This proved a very profitable investment which allowed them to be at the forefront of changes in the local labour market rather than go with the flow. As the returns to this investment grew, their choices also increased exponentially. Having gained in confidence to navigate through the local labour market effectively, they could now sense the changes in the lifestyle of the locals and could plan carefully their next step. While they maintained the petrol station they also opened a restaurant, which did better than their previous undertakings. However, this was not going to stop them from improving their socio-economic situation. As soon as they foresaw that the expansion of the local population and the reconstruction exigencies would be much more profitable business, possibly providing them with better working conditions and long-term security, they made yet another career change and opened a warehouse/retailing store which specialises in all building-related goods (from plumbing equipment to fitted kitchens and so on).

Nowadays the central one of the three branches has become a company large enough to employ, apart from Demosthenes's three sons, also some of his grandchildren (most of them in their late twenties, early thirties, they are employed full-time in the family firm) and other local workers. Demosthenes has a first-hand knowledge of the changes in the local economy and the impact of masonry in the development of the labour market. In the following account, he evaluates his career choices which are linked to the wider opportunities available at the time:

Many people were employed in the marble mines in the [wider] area. And a lot of them were employed in masonry: from builders, to plumbers, to painters and many more occupations. When we first made this store we were also having other jobs at the same time. But gradually we settled here and achieved some things. You know, when you are young, you start form something different to what you end up doing. Had I stayed in education I'd have become a teacher but I didn't and got instead into this struggle which is harder, a much harder road to take. But much more prosperous. (Demosthenes, male, non-Roma)



While Demosthenes's account might suggest that opportunities were in abundance, this is not the case for all those in the middle generation. For Roma men did not benefit to the same extent from the expansion of the labour market and the new employment opportunities that emerged. Barriers associated with their inferior social position and status would block their way into the newly created jobs. The local labour market had its own mechanisms of exclusion of the 'other' and they were quite effective. Transmission of occupation in Roma families was limited to musicians, whose job was exclusively identified with the Roma and has always been perceived as unwanted and underrated by the non-Roma. The inferior treatment they were subjected to, impeded their occupational career and inhibited substantially their social-mobility advancement. More crucially, in the period of emerging occupational opportunities they could not capitalise on them to the same extent as the dominant group. One of the most sought after career paths—self-employment (chiefly through store ownership)—which led a big part of the non-Roma population to quit peasantry and advance socio-economically, was not equally open to the Roma. Practices of marginalisation and direct discrimination would not allow this to materialise:

There are no exchanges in the [labour] market [between Roma and non-Roma]. All the Roma are manual workers. Nowadays, at the best you can find a builder, a tiler and these kinds of job. There are no educated people amongst them. Neither can you find them owning stores here. There's only one flower shop that belongs to a woman from this race. Nothing else. There was a guy who used to have a café/bar, but that's that and nothing else. (Euripides, male, non-Roma)

Nonetheless, not all the Roma were in the same economic situation. For internal differentiation, if anything, was more increased now than in the years of agricultural dominance. Hence, some Roma would soon follow prosper-

ous pathways. Probably the safest route to achieve this was through external (abroad) or internal (within Greece) emigration to areas where the Roma identity could be concealed and the barriers to their occupational and class advancement uncorrelated with their (Roma) origin. For emigration had wide-ranging effects. In the case of Protopi, external emigration was considerable but not as sizeable as in other areas of Greece where access to means of subsistence (primarily land) was limited. Amongst the benefits of external emigration were diminishing population pressure on productive resources and increasing remittances which, in the case of Greece, outnumbered in size the other types of invisible receipts, namely of tourism and transportation¹⁸ (Jouganatos 1992), and the improvement of labour skills after repatriation.¹⁹ This latter function was a decisive 'safety valve' in respect of employment demand and the growing labour supply after the late 1950s as well as an escape for many Roma people to their discrimination in the labour market.

A case in point is Eurikleia's father. He came from a family of peasants and got married to a woman with a similar background (Roma). While he detected that the construction sector would be the driving force of the new economy he could not find enough opportunities, apart from some in manual unskilled work, which was often not very well rewarded. In order to escape the meagre prospects of peasantry and the limited opportunities for occupational and economic progress for him and his family, he decided to emigrate to Germany on his own. Through remittances he sent back, but also thanks to the hard work of the family who stayed behind and, crucially, due to Eurikleia's mother's financial management skills, the family achieved substantial progress and economic success. During the interview, Eurikleia would repeatedly refer to her family's economic situation and she would recall with pride the privileges of growing up in an affluent environment.

When I was living with my parents we weren't working much on the land. That happened after I got married, because there was poverty. At my parents' we had lots of money. My father was earning quite a lot. While in Germany he was earning even more... That's how we achieved some things early on: we built a new house, like the new ones you see nowadays. Well, at my parents' I had all these comforts. (Eurikleia, female, Roma)

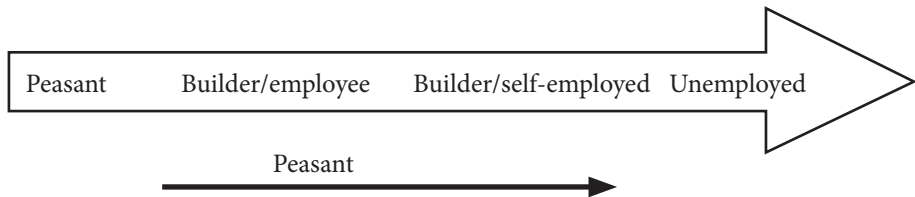
This came in stark contrast to her husband's situation. Theophilos, a male Roma in his early 60s, shared with all other respondents (of similar age and older) the struggle to get by during the hard times (i.e. the 1940s and 1950s) and the anxiety to improve their living standards thereafter. He descended from a very poor family who were working on their own land but would occasionally

18. Referring to the 1952–1966 period.

19. Indicatively, between 1955 and 1977, more than 1.236 million Greeks emigrated (mainly to West Germany) while only 237,000 repatriated (Damanakis 1997: 42).

also get hired by non-Roma locals. After he married to Eurikleia, he carried on with some agricultural activities while he also sought employment in the rising construction sector. He initially started working as a builder for others and eventually for himself. However, Theophilos was more vulnerable to the socio-economic transformations than many other respondents. Family support was not available and competition, which was becoming even harsher, would hit him hard. For him it was harder to find a job at the present conjuncture rather than in the past. This is lucidly sketched in the following excerpt. The way he presented his current occupational reality also denotes a fear of the the local labour force losing their skills since, for him, the skills of the new workers (chiefly Albanian) are increasing. In his narration, he makes it clear that the socio-economic changes in the last few decades did not affect him positively, which is not hard to understand as he was the only man interviewed in this generation who was affected by unemployment. In the last twenty years he stopped growing crops so that his family had to rely entirely on his income as a builder; his job was now permeated by instability and exposure to the newly introduced socio-economic changes as well as to the unpredictable weather conditions:

At the moment I'm not working. There used to be jobs but they've reached their limit. Now what is to blame I dunno. It can be many things but most of the blame rests with the foreigners, the Albanians; in the end, they will damage us. They came unskilled but we supported them and taught them how to do the job. Soon they'll reach our [level of living] and we'll reach theirs. We'll be working for them! [...] The local youth won't work as builders; they'd rather do nothing. The Albanians will soon take the jobs that our youngsters don't want to do. (Theophilos, male, Roma)



Women

As already pointed out, the careers of many local women were associated closely with those of their husbands. This became obvious in the research where women's employment histories are more difficult to explore because their accounts are often entangled with those of their parents and their husbands. The researcher feels that he or she has to be constantly alert not to allow these stories to be subsumed by the males' own stories, which were perceived as the most significant ones, at least so far as income contribution and participation in the labour market was involved. Besides, if we take on board occupations and tasks in the division of labour reserved only for females, we can get a more

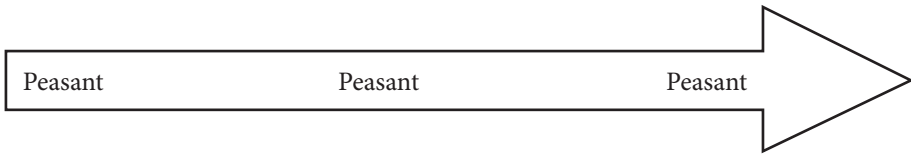
complete idea about the occupational situation and the structure of opportunities in Protopi.

To an extent this is conveyed through Eurikleia's account, which was partly sketched above through her father and husband's trajectories. What is missing, though, is the presentation of her own contribution and experiences which have to be examined on their own terms though relationally with the male figures that affected her choices and life-course mobility. Thus, while life in her parents' household seemed promising and living conditions were above the standards of most local Roma families, 'marriage mobility' gave a different twist to this prospect or, put more crudely, downgraded her socio-economic position. Her parents were well aware of this prospect and were thus vehemently opposed to her marriage with Theophilos. Though he was from a local Roma family and Eurikleia would not leave Protopi (which for many families was perceived as a threat unless it was to move to the city), his low socio-economic position made him an unwelcome match to their daughter. Nevertheless, economic calculations did not interfere with Eurikleia's desire to marry to the man she had selected. In that context, fulfilling her own desire has to be seen as an act of agency that cannot be restricted to merely rationalised or economistic processes. For women should not be seen as passive recipients of deeds dictated by men, though they are hugely influenced by them. They are as active agents as men though not always under conditions of their own making. This shows that their opportunities in the labour market are more limited than the men's. Thus, while for Roma women in the second generation, employment was the default condition mainly in agriculture, many of them also actively looked for alternative jobs. This was usually episodic and highly depended on the availability of jobs, as the man, as head of the household, had priority in employment. For Roma women in this age group would not be found in occupations other than peasantry and unskilled manual or, at best, semi-skilled ones, habitually part-time and for fixed periods of time, without pension rights or any other benefits.

In Eurikleia's case, this is echoed in her post-marriage employment choices. While for a long time she worked on the family farm, after Theophilos switched into a full-time career as a builder she was left entirely on her own while at the same time she had to look after two children and take care of the domestic workload. While the option of wage-earning was not excluded it was never within Eurikleia's reach.

In the beginning it was very, very hard. We would work round the clock. Go fetch logs for the fireplace, go to the crops, look after the animals, come back to cook and endless other little things. Then we decided to leave my in-laws' house because there too were many siblings. We built our own house. We had some crops but then Theophilos would go to his job and I'd stay behind on the land. Then I had to come back, look after

the kids and the house until I was forced to stop because I contracted asthma and got very ill. (Eurikleia, female, Roma)



While women working on the land would free their husbands to work on a different sphere of economic activity, increasingly more (non-Roma) women in the middle generation started also switching into other domains of production themselves. For apart from labour within the household, which would help in managing, investing and even augmenting the assets of the family, people started realising that female employment outside the household unit was not a threat but a necessity.

Besides the economic underpinnings for such a shift, attitudes and beliefs also started changing. One of the most crucial of these changes was the attitude towards female education.

In pre-war Greece, only primary education was free though access was not unrestricted. General poverty, financial constraints, large family size and high mortality rates were among the factors that would discourage families from prioritising their children's education. Only a limited number of respondents in the first generation had graduated from primary or lower secondary school and they were broadly identified as outstanding and/or deriving from exceptionally privileged families. In the post-war period, as in all Western European countries, state investment in education grew rapidly while educational reform and expansion became the cornerstones of educational change. What was often causing these changes was the association between education and the labour market demands of the capitalist economies. This was also the case in post-war Greece, where reforms sought to raise the educational standards of the population (cf. Milonas 1999) as well as to provide the developing economy with skilled workforce in key positions. The improvement of living conditions, which was gradually evident from the mid 1960s onwards, was accompanied by improvement in agricultural conditions and production as well as by the emergence of new occupations and the over-expansion of the state and public services. These latter positions in the new economy needed educated labour force to occupy them rendering thus education the avenue *par excellence* of this type of workforce (Themelis 2008).

High educational credentials, such as a university degree, became a secure means of upward social mobility as it could secure their holders a job in the highest positions where they could enjoy all the concomitant benefits: higher income, security of employment, good working conditions, and, not least,

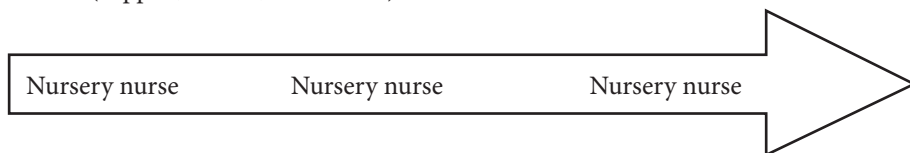
enhanced social status. As the general literacy level was still particularly low, a certificate from upper secondary school (or even better from higher education) was increasingly required for positions in the public services.

Participants of all age groups broadly acknowledged that the expansion of female employment was not merely a positive development in the social relations of production but also a necessary one. Sappho, a woman who went to tertiary education herself and has been on full-time employment all her working life (bar two periods of time for childbirth), exemplifies this lucidly:

Sappho: I can see changes [that were brought about] with the [general] development. Technology has assisted a lot too; like with the [advent of] television and all that stuff. They've made people change a lot.

Q: In your opinion positively?

Sappho: Oh yes, definitely! Everything has changed to the better, in all aspects. We've made progress in all fronts. Women's position has improved a lot. They're more in education and on the [labour] market. Telly and all that stuff has made a real difference. (Sappho, female, non-Roma)



Sappho's occupational career was not atypical of non-Roma women in this age group. The minimum level of education of all those interviewed provides some evidence to this growing trend: one of them (Sappho) was a university graduate, another one had attended further education college and the third one graduated from high school. Two of these women had an independent career (as a nursery nurse and store owner) while the third was assistant to the family firm. Of course, the nature of these occupations is also important (incidentally, they were all associated with typical female employment). Though this cannot be pursued further here it is worth pointing out that similar jobs were not available to Roma women in the same generation. Research material suggests that Roma women in this generation would either remain in the primary sector or at best take unskilled manual employment.

7. From the mid-1990s: modernisation, globalisation and market rigidities

From the early 1980s onwards, Greece had entered a new phase characterised by unprecedented socio-economic transformations, such as increasing competition in the labour market, rising unemployment, deceleration of growth and the challenge and economic opportunities of globalisation. Although this

situation started to reverse from the mid-1990s, the economy was transformed too fast to allow many individuals to adjust to this pace of change. It is characteristic that the new and steady wave of (jobless) growth (Featherstone and Papadimitriou 2008) was accompanied by transformations in the labour market that would transform yet again the existing relations of production.

The expansion of the service sector, for instance, which has been relentless throughout the post-war period and the attendant appeal of the white-collar occupations, left a plethora of manual jobs vacant. These undesired occupations were taken by Albanian economic immigrants, who would often work under very poor conditions and at a lower pay-rate than their Greek counterparts (Naxakis 2001). In many cases this has caused resentment (see Theopihlos above) and even hostility by Greek society as they (the Albanians) are often blamed for the rising and persistently high unemployment (Alexias 2001).

Some of these aspects are increasingly discernible in Protopi. Thus, apart from self-employment or employment in craft-related occupations that were bestowed by the parents (usually the father), education was the main sought after pathway for respondents in the youngest generation. The needs of the new economy were now more or less endorsed by the families and the rise of the new, highly educated social group had also paved the way. Hence the example of those in the middle generation, who had capitalised on the demand for educational credentials, started being adopted by their children. The immediate and direct rewards they enjoyed after graduation from upper secondary, vocational school and even more so from university, in other words of those who 'made it' through education, was a success story for the younger ones. Improved practices and attitudes towards education contributed to the increase of the educational level of the general population in Greece in general and in Protopi in particular. The contribution of state-sponsored education, with more schools and universities across the country and fewer barriers, assisted into the shift from low skilled to jobs to ones that required educational qualifications. 'Education-based meritocracy' (Goldthorpe 2003) was to become the new ideal that families would gradually subscribe to.

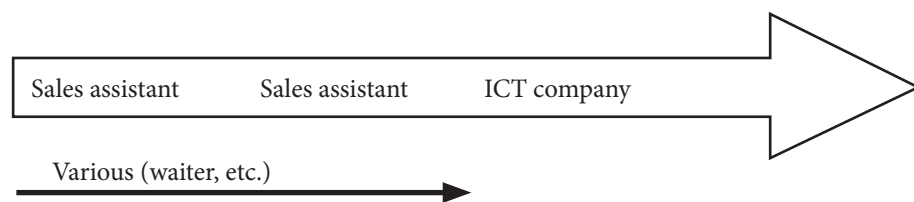
Men

Inescapably, the centrality of education in the career choices and strategies of individuals in the youngest generation has become increasingly important. As credentials were proving a successful avenue for promoting the social mobility for the first graduates, and for as long as the labour market was open to absorb these degree holders, their younger counterparts wanted to follow suit. Indeed this trend would become dominant throughout the 1980s and the 1990s. While though the importance of education has undoubtedly increased in popular parlance and as family practice, the returns may not be commensurate with the

value attached. That is, a great number of highly educated university graduates end up working in jobs completely different from the ones they were trained for. What is more, credentials no longer guarantee labour-market success as the economy has been further transformed in the recent years in a number of ways. This is lucidly conveyed through Phaedon, a university graduate. For him, aspiring to get a degree was part of his family upbringing: both his sister and his father (rare for his generation) are university graduates. In the five years since he graduated from university, he moved a lot between jobs. His views in respect to occupational opportunities for university graduates are indicative of the insecurity the new economic conditions and the restructured labour market have brought about:

For my peers it is hard to get a proper job although many of them have gone to uni—one of them is a physical trainer but works at a bar; another one is a Greek-language teacher and works as a waiter; everyone does something different, probably not everyone but most of them. They haven't selected these jobs; they were forced to choose them in order to get by. (Phaedon, male, non-Roma)

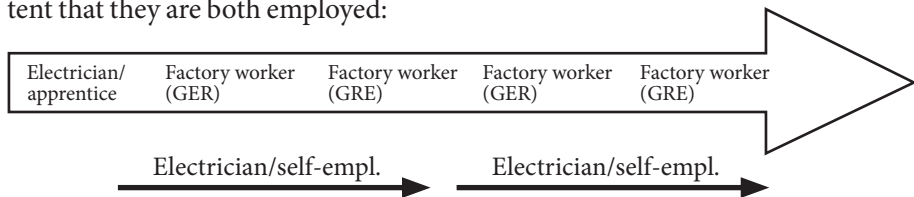
When I interviewed Phaedon, in the winter of 2003, he was going through this stage of uncertainty and was very worried about his job prospects. This was partly informed by his experience thus far, initially as a sales assistant in a big franchising firm and two years later in a similar position in another company. At the same time, he was doing other hourly paid jobs to supplement his income. When I saw him again in the summer of 2007 he was in his early 30s and sounded like a committed self-made entrepreneur: he had opened an ICT company that provided goods and services to the local area. Within two years he had hired an assistant to help him with the workload. Though it remains to be seen how this endeavour fares in a constantly restructuring economy and an unstable global economic climate, Phaedon's trajectory is different from most of the Roma males of his generation that I acquired information about.



Pericles, for one, started off working with his father as an apprentice electrician before he decided to take a job in a factory in order to secure a monthly wage as an unskilled manual worker. For him embarking on the specific career path was more of an inevitable outcome than an intentional choice:

Some people would go to school and some others like myself who didn't go to [secondary] school would go instead learn a job. Some of my classmates became tilers, others plumbers, carpenters and so on. I'm talking about those who weren't good at school so as to go to uni. Today one of them has a garage, another one a restaurant, someone else is an entrepreneur, there is a teacher, an army officer, a captain and all kinds of jobs. But for me there was nothing much else to do. (Pericles, male, Roma)

The job opportunities that the expansion of the labour market facilitated in the 1960s and 1970s has succumbed to internal and external forces. That is, the local market has reached its limits of job creation while demographic changes (lower mortality rates, repatriation of emigrant workers, the advent of economic migrants) and pressures from the wider (including the global) market have contributed to the stalling of opportunities. This led Pericles to emigrate to Germany, where he stayed for six years, working in a factory again as an unskilled worker. During this period, though (mid 1990s), Germany was similarly confronted with labour-market rigidities and high rates of unemployment, forcing many foreign workers like Pericles to repatriate. After he returned to Greece, he tried to work as self-employed electrician, but securing enough work to get by was hard, as times had yet again changed. Although emigrating a second time was not an easy option, it was encouraged by the fact that his wife was also unemployed. His second stay in Germany was shorter lived (two years), his job, similar (unskilled manual worker in a factory). His consequent return to Greece seems have characteristics of durability this time (though another move cannot be precluded): he managed to get a full-time job in a factory (as in-house electrician) while at his spare time he works as a free-lance electrician. Although neither he nor his wife (upon repatriation she found a part-time job as a cleaner) are satisfied with the financial rewards, nevertheless they are content that they are both employed:



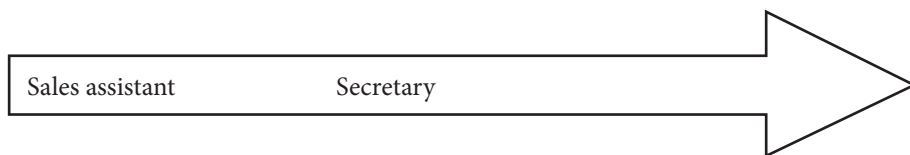
Women

The new educational environment and labour market exigencies have seen the increased participation of young Roma women in education. It is not rare for females in the third generation, especially the younger ones, to enter university. The recent university expansion and the eased admission standards have made access to tertiary education much easier. Moreover, the changing mentality and attitudes about women's education is evident in many families who increasingly finance their daughters' studies.

Roma women from Protopi are increasingly contributing to the household economy and participating in the labour market, not necessarily that of Protopi but mainly in the big cities. Although getting employment in Protopi would still be harder for many of them compared with most non-Roma females, Roma women are now much more mobile and active in seeking employment than their counterparts in the previous generations. With some caution, it could be maintained that Roma women in the third generation are increasingly participating in the labour market in a range of occupations, as they are more confident about themselves and independent but also thanks to education qualifications some of them possess. The only problem is that nowadays educational credentials increasingly devalue—given the surplus in university graduates—while the absorbing capacity of the markets for this type of workforce is correspondingly decreasing. In the following extract a Roma respondent, Hercules, talks about his children’s education and career prospects:

Unemployment is high for those who go to uni. My daughter is doing a post-graduate diploma and my son works with me in [the] decorating [sector]. I have been taking him to work with me since he was little. He saw with his own eyes that unemployment was high for graduates and stayed with me [...] I was not expecting my children to do any specific job. I was only expecting the state, since they studied, to get them a job. But they are unemployed. I don’t know what jobs I wouldn’t want them to do because my daughter is unemployed. She’s got five diplomas and is unemployed. She wonders: “why did I have to spend all these years in education?” (Hercules, male Roma)

Though not as lucidly, the same feeling was expressed by Heliad, Hercules’s daughter. After graduating she could find only part-time jobs where she could not apply her skills. This led her to do a post-graduate degree which did not improve her employability. After having spent three years in Protopi she decided to leave for Athens where she attended a training course while she was working as a secretary in a small firm. When I last saw her, she was 31 years old, working full-time in an organisation in Athens which gave her a more fulfilling though very low paying job. Given her previous uncertainty and job-seeking experience she is content that a job was found after all.



Thus far it must have become obvious that the requirements of modern life and economy have encouraged the participation of more women in the labour market even in sectors or positions that used to be traditional male strongholds. As far as non-Roma women were concerned this was even more pronounced

than in respect of Roma. Furthermore, the former seemed to be in a better position to exploit the local labour market than their counterparts. For apart from self-employment, assistantship or partnership in the family firm, which by now has become quite widespread, they also tended to acquire financial independence at much a higher degree though not always at the same age:

When I first came into this area, everyone was working on the land. There were no supermarkets and no skilled jobs or crafts. It took a while to develop this. At that time all women were inside the house with the kids or on the land.

But now they contribute to the family income, otherwise they can't make it [as a family]. There's no other way to make ends meet. You see today, we want more things in our lives: for the kind of lives we are leading, for our children, etc. If just one person was in work, it wouldn't have been possible. (Aspasia, female, non-Roma)

But this is not to say that women's careers have the same characteristics as men's. Female employment is typically intermittent due to extensive involvement in the household, childbirth and childcare duties. The percentage of part-time employment is also higher among women and the pay gap with their male counterparts is substantial. Venus's story is characteristic of some of the features of females at her age (late 30s), who did not go to higher education and thus had to prioritise career and family in a way that is unknown to men of the same age. Venus got her first job as an unskilled manual worker soon after graduation from (lower) secondary school. She kept this job only for a few months, as she subsequently got married and followed her husband to Protopi (until she was working in Athens). It was only after eighteen years of marriage that she managed to go back to employment, again in unskilled labour, in a local family business. While for most of this period, childcare responsibilities did not allow her to pursue actively any employment, when she eventually started seeking a job she was confronted with a rigid labour market and a personal employment history that did not equip her with the 'required' skills:

I searched for a job in the past but on one hand I had the kids and on the other some misfortunes, so I gave up. Now I have started again and I just found this job. I should rather say others found it for me... (Venus, female, non-Roma)

As it actually occurs in real life, individuals assess their alternative paths before they embark onto decisions about their occupational future. When these paths seem to be closed, though, frustration is inevitable. Occupational life stories then are as much about lived experiences and dreams realised as about unfulfilled ambitions and dreams that never became:

Venus: It is very hard for someone in my situation to find a job because I am completely unskilled, I've never worked and I'm too old for these times.

Q: What are they [the employers] looking for?

Venus: They are looking for skilled workers, for young people and people who can

work uninsured and this and that... it's so much harder for women, I think. At least at my age. It's much easier for a younger girl, especially a good looking one...

Q: If you were to do things again in your life, what would you do differently?

Venus: I'd finish my studies, I'd do everything later in my life and I'd try to get a job that would be relevant to my studies. I'd arrange everything according to my studies. (Venus, female, non-Roma)



Conclusion

The material discussed here provides a brief account of the employment trajectories of individuals in an area that underwent significant socio-economic transformations throughout the post-war years and continues to do so. This account offered useful insights into the exploration of some prevailing life-course mobility patterns in a provincial town in the north-west of Greece. Thus, for participants in the middle generation and for the younger ones in the older, there appear to have been more opportunities for upward social mobility as their career progress coincided with increased job supply and an expanding labour market. For those in the youngest generation, there is increased job insecurity and seemingly less opportunity for movement. For the Roma participants, barriers associated with their marginalised and inferior socio-economic position may have acted against their occupational and social advancement, or at least to the same extent as the dominant group. Education has become an expedient means for climbing up the social ladder, especially after the 1960s. An increase in educational qualifications alone seems to account to a large extent for the observed movements, as many positions that were created in the state and public sectors absorbed this type of workforce. Though this development is often presented as a 'meritocracy', women did not have an equal share in the emergent career opportunities as their mobility was influenced by their (parents') expectations and mentality, as well as by other social factors. Female employment possesses most characteristics associated with women's career (part-time, intermittent) and a seemingly high incidence of self-employment.

Overall, it could be argued that after the Second World War, participants tried to use all means available to them and their families and capitalise on any emergent opportunities for career and social advancement. By doing so they legitimised the unequally structured labour markets and the uneven distribution of opportunities along gender, ethnic and class lines that permeated

the social reality of Protopi both in the years of petty commodity production but chiefly after the emergence of the neoliberal capitalist mode of production. Given the importance of work and occupational achievement in people's lives ('worth through work'; Sennet 2003) success or failure is incumbent upon one's efforts but within a certain socio-economic environment that ranks, sorts and distributes individuals in a multitude of ways, which occasionally can run against to their best of efforts. Life-course mobility, explored here through the presentation of occupational trajectories of selected individuals, is an expedient tool for unravelling such mechanisms and the way people experience them. It is hoped that such an exploration has the potential to complement traditional mobility studies which are essential in revealing patterns and macro-trends in people's mobility. In order for this to be achieved, more work needs to be done in the investigation of inter-generational social mobility which was here referred to only in passing. It is expected that this will further assist in avoiding the reifying and 'othering' tendencies in theorising about the Roma and furnish us with invaluable tools for a holistic, critical, analysis.

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