

Proletarianization Under
Tourism: A Micro-Level Analysis

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One of the most powerful sets of social change processes experienced during economic expansion -- Proletarianization -- has not been adequately addressed in the works of contemporary sociologists (Tilly, 1979:1). This set of processes, which increases the number of people who lack control over the means of production and who survive by selling their labor is, nevertheless, studied more by historians and economists (Reich, 1978:179-185).

Most sociologists, touching upon the issue, describe proletarianization as "occupational differentiation" (Ness, 1970:1). In their large-scale models, they discuss occupational differentiation as a process that produces strain, stress, malintegration, and deviance; society, they argue, responds to this with social control and further differentiation (Parsons, 1971:77). Rooted in Durkheim's structural differentiation theory, although descriptive, these theoretical accounts do not deal with the human factors involved, nor do they provide the historical context in any given case.

The recent general perception of the issue deems the "proletariat" as composed of workers employed in subdivided tasks in large-scale manufacturing units. However, proletarianization is not strictly related to industrialization, which is a creature of the last century; it has been going on for the past five centuries and is associated with the general advancement of capitalism into various economic and social spheres (Tilly, 1979:3).

This last proposition, which could be relaxed and restated as "proletarianization is associated with the drastic expansion of any of the three economic sectors -- primary, secondary, tertiary," needs careful evaluation. Of exactly equal importance is the analysis of the factors due to which, and the historical context in which, proletarianization takes place.

The aim of this paper is to look at this issue by presenting the case of Drethia, an agricultural rural community in the island of Crete, which has experienced drastic economic expansion through the growth of mass tourism since the 1960s.

Crete had been carefully studied by the government since the early sixties, in an attempt to explore its opportunities for systematic tourism development. However, tourism expansion in rural Greece generally was heavily promoted by the military government of 1967. Up to that year, the strict banking criteria for tourist investment financing had led to the concentration of tourist installations in urban centers. Between 1967 and 1974, banks provided financing to those selected by the Hellenic Tourist Organization, without mortgage and other pay-back-loan requirements, and investments in rural areas were encouraged. During and after this period, general tourism development plans were drafted, assigning "financial" and "operational" incentives to relevant investments and declaring priority development regions (KEPE, 1981:10-14).

Several parts of Crete, Drethia being one of them, were included among the top development priority areas to receive financial incentives (loans, grants, low interest rates, etc.). Operational incentives (tax relief, discounted insurance premiums, etc.) were also provided. Infrastructure projects were undertaken directly by the government.

The necessary service supply organizations for "package" tourism -- hotel groups and transport and tour operators -- originated from developed tourist-sending countries. Hotel groups operated in partnership with the government and private entrepreneurs, under leases or under fixed period management contracts. Transport and tour operators controlled the great bulk of tourist traffic between the sending countries and Greece.

Since then, Drethia has become one of the most attractive tourist resorts in Crete. As a consequence, the socioeconomic characteristics of the Drethians have been altered significantly in contrast with those of the subsistence farming period (Kousis, 1984:109-116).

The Subsistence Farming Period

The pre-tourism period(1950-1964) in Drethia was characterized by subsistence farming. On the average, each nuclear family household owned seven or more small pieces of land on which they cultivated vegetables, citrus fruits, melons, olives, and carobs. Each plot was usually less than half a stremma (1 stremma = 0.247 acre). The actual distribution of land among Drethians is not known. However, given the data at hand, it may be argued that, for this period, the largest property did not exceed 40 stremmata and the smallest was between 2 and 14 stremmata. Through inheritance, land was passed down to the sons and daughters of a nuclear family.

The occupational distribution of Drethian heads of households follows the pattern of economic activities in the fifties and early sixties. As seen in Table 1 below, Drethia was a relatively small community of subsistence farmers, some small shopkeepers, and a few government employees (teachers, policemen, civil servants, etc.); wage earners were almost absent from the scene.

TABLE 1.

Occupational Distribution of Heads of Households
in Drethia During the Pre-Tourism Period, 1950-64*

Occupations	No. of Heads of Households	
Farmers	288	(82.3%)
Government Employees	19	(5.4%)
Self/Family Employed	37	(10.6%)
Wage Earners	3	(1.7%)
Total	350	(100.0%)

*On the basis of data courtesy of Drethia community office and personal interviews with locals. Figures are calculated by adding three active male birth cohorts; 1890s, 1900s, and 1910s. The actual number of households is higher. Households headed by women are not included.

During this period, the village consisted of approximately 430 families. Although based on their land holdings some 15 families were better off, property was not concentrated in the hands of a few families, and there were no rural "bosses." The great majority of Drethian families worked for themselves in their own fields.

Consequently, even though since 1952 a European School of Archaeology bought approximately 13 stremmata of local land, as seen in Table 2, Drethia had not altered its subsistence farming economy in any way.

Table 2

Significant Land Buys During the
Pre-Tourism Period in Drethia, 1950-64*

Buyer	No. of buyers	No. of sellers	Land size (str.)	No. of fields**
Outside entrepreneurs	0	0	0	0
Local entrepreneurs	0	0	0	0
School of Archaeology	1	32	12.9	32
Total	1	32	12.9	32

* On the basis of data courtesy of District's Bureau of Deeds & Mortgages

** All cultivated before sale.

In conclusion, the period between 1950 and 1964, as well as the first half of the twentieth century, are times when the village's families were cultivating their own land in order to make a living. Selling one's labor for survival was almost nonexistent then.

The Early-Tourism Period

Between 1965 and 1972, land ownership changed significantly, given that a large part of the coastal area was purchased by a handful of outsiders, as shown in Table 3. The major buyers originated from other parts of Crete, Athens, and abroad. The most important buyer, G.T.T., is a trust of a European multinational of hotels, a Greek bank, and a Cretan businessman.

Table 3

Significant Land Buys During the
Early-Tourism Period in Drethia, 1965-72*

Buyer	No. of buyers	No. of sellers	Land size (str.)	No. of fields**
Outside entrepreneurs	6	342	298.4	318
Local entrepreneurs	4	37	32.4	32
School of Archaeology	1	43	8.9	39
Total	11	422	339.7	389

* On the basis of data courtesy of District's Bureau of Deeds & Mortgages.

** Almost all of them cultivated before sale.

A former factory owner, other businessmen, and a former doctor are the rest of the major land buyers during this period.

The sellers were usually "forced" to give up their fields, either by law or because of their economic status. Land expropriation was used by the authorities in order to allow the School of Archaeology to pursue excavations; in this case, expropriation was justified and legally based on the "public interest" clause of the constitution. On other occasions, real estate legislation was suitably manipulated by the large land buyers who were able to purchase all fields that "happened" to be either between the buyer's property and the road or surrounded by the buyer's property. Threats and other illegal procedures were also practiced very often and they were a frustrating experience for the local farmers. An 81 year-old man said:

Ten years ago I sold to Katonakis 3-4 stremmata for 300,000 drachmas. They (the buyer, his attorney, and the police) made me sell because everyone around me sold. G.T.T. wanted to give me 100,000 drachmas for it.

Land was also purchased from locals through other methods. Another seller of this period indicated that whenever the locals inquired about the reasons for the big land purchase, one of the outside buyers answered that it would be used to build a cement factory. Since at those times there were no indications that this area would become the tourist resort it is today, the story about the cement factory was taken seriously.

Most of the locals who sold land of their own will were usually in real need of cash. Given that subsistence farming yielded very low returns, many of the villagers were in debt. Land sale money was often used to pay back loans, build or repair a house, and provide a dowry for the daughter of the family.

Overall, changes in land ownership during the early-tourism period resulted in the loss of part of the subsistence base for a large number of local families.

Once the coastal land purchases were made, almost all of the buyers started building large tourist accommodation complexes. This had further implications for the locals. Many of them began to sell their labor by doing construction-related work; unskilled and semiskilled. This is reflected in Table 4, below.

Table 4

Occupational Distribution of Heads of Households in
Drethia During the Early-Tourism Period, 1965-72*

	No. of Heads of Households
Farmers	256 (47.9%)
Government Employees	13 (2.4%)
Self/Family Employed	154 (28.8%)
Wage Earners	111 (20.8%)
Total	534 (100.0%)

*On the basis of data courtesy of Drethia community office, the District's Bureau of Deeds, and personal interviews with locals. Figures are calculated by adding three active male birth cohorts; 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s. The actual number of families is higher. Households headed by women are not included.

When a couple of the larger tourist accommodations started operating in the early seventies, hotel employees were added to the wage earners. At this time, those from the locals who could invest in small businesses did take the opportunity to do so. Thus, comparing the data in Tables 1 and 4, one sees that with tourism expansion, the number of farmers decreased drastically, while the numbers for small shopkeepers and wage earners increased considerably; especially the latter.

Overall, during the early-tourism period, the previous status of land ownership and occupational profile of the village underwent significant changes.

The Full-Scale Tourism Period

Although late, when the locals realized that coastal land purchased in the late sixties was being used to set up tourist accommodations, they gradually minimized their sales; some of them increased their purchases. Between 1973 and

1982, total land purchases fell to about one fifth of the total during the preceding period, as seen in Table 5 below. The former mayor of the village, who served three consecutive terms in the late sixties and early seventies, indicated that current land sales by the locals are extremely rare. If such a sale occurs, the money is placed in an investment with high returns.

Table 5

Significant Land Buys During the Full-Scale Tourism Period in Drethia, 1973-82*

Buyer	No. of buyers	No. of sellers	Land size (str.)	No. of fields**
Outside				
Entrepreneurs	4	72	11.3	61
Local				
Entrepreneurs	3	35	32.6	28
School of				
Archaeology	1	17	8.1	14
Total	8	124	52.0	103

* On the basis of data courtesy of District's Bureau of Deeds & Mortgages.

** Almost all of them cultivated before sale.

The intense tourism-related construction activity of the late 1960s continued its pace throughout the full-scale tourism period. It included not only hotels but other types of businesses (food, entertainment, etc.) as well. Consequently, the unskilled and semiskilled labor supply increased further in those years, most of it coming out of subsistence farmers.

Extensive tourist business construction in Drethia introduced a new pattern of capital ownership, changing the community's old social dynamics. The major source of income in the area is tourist bed ownership. About 80 percent of this income accrues to outside investors who own the largest and more expensive hotels. Table 6 presents tourist bed ownership as recorded in the early 1980s.

Table 6

Tourist Bed Ownership in Drethia, 1982*

Bed Class	No. of beds owned by outsiders	No. of beds owned by locals	No. of local owners (families)
A and B	1,832	155	2
C, D, and E	231	770	16
Rent-rooms	48	270	26
Totals	2,111	1,195	44

* On the basis of data from: Hellenic Chamber of Hotels, Guide to Greek Hotels, Athens, 1984; also, Hellenic Chamber of Hotels files and Drethia community office records.

In the early 1980s, tourist businesses other than accommodations amounted to about 180, based on a personal survey and interviews with village officials; 60 of them were food and entertainment places, the remaining 120 being tourist item shops. In 1973, less than half of these existed, while around 1969, the total number did not exceed 8. Most of them are owned by locals but are usually rented to nonlocals.

The new pattern of capital ownership and control of the village economy had important consequences for the locals. Toward the end of the seventies, five socioeconomic groups very different from those of the pre-tourism phase made their appearance, based on wealth asset holdings (hotels, shops, land). The first group is comprised of the six largest land buyers and/or owners of A' class hotels. Beyond them, the 730 local families are classified into four groups. Buyers of coastal zone land, owners of B' and C' class hotels and large tourist item and food stores comprise the second group following the outsiders; about 41 families are in this group. The third group, made up of 68 families, includes

owners of D' and E' class hotels as well as medium size tourist stores. About 160 families owning lower forms of tourist accommodations and other businesses are contained in the fourth group. The remaining 515 families are active mainly as tourist business employees (maintenance personnel, gardeners, waiters, cooks, etc.) and subsistence farmers.

The occupational distribution of Drethian heads of households, presented in Table 7 below, reflects mainly the new pattern of capital ownership during the seventies and early eighties.

Table 7

Occupational Distribution of Heads of Households in
Drethia During the Full-Scale Tourism Period, 1973-82*

Occupations	No. of Heads of Households
Farmers	156 (24.4%)
Government Employees	25 (3.9%)
Self/Family Employed	173 (27.1%)
Wage Earners	285 (44.6%)
Total	639 (100.0%)

* On the basis of data courtesy of Drethia community office, deeds, and personal interviews with locals, the actual number of households is higher. Households headed by women not included.

Some important trends and facts are also hidden behind the numbers in Table 7. On the one hand, the new economic opportunities led to a considerable increase in Drethia's population, most of the new residents originating from various parts of the country. Repatriated local immigrants in European countries used their savings to either start a new business or rent and run an existing one. On the other hand, the occupational choice which a head of a local

household outside the business sector could make centers around two critical questions: a) can he start a family business, and if not, b) does he prefer to work in agriculture or as an employee in the tourist sector?

Regarding the first question, Drethia now belongs among the so-called "oversaturated areas" of the country, as they have been defined by the government of 1981 in an effort to promote tourism in nondeveloped regional areas. As a consequence, since financial and operational incentives are operative with preference for those nondeveloped regions, loans and other forms of aid are very hard to get in Drethia. Simultaneously, most of the coastal land as well as the village center have been occupied by existing businesses. Although less significant, increases in construction costs prove to be prohibitive for candidate small investors. For all these reasons as well as the revolving competition among medium and small local businessmen, investors in Drethia must be high-risk takers.

With reference to the second question, nonbusiness persons in Drethia prefer to become wage earners rather than engage in agriculture. There are a number of economic and social psychological reasons underlying this choice. Financially, wage earning, even though seasonal itself, is considered to be a more dependable source of income compared to agriculture. The latter, which is now mainly based on the monoculture of potatoes, is greatly affected by natural catastrophies, low product prices, and other market deficiencies. Agriculture is also considered by the younger locals, who have little or no experience in farming, to be regressive. This perception, supported by thier positive attitude toward being with people from developed countries and working in "cleaner" and immediately rewarding jobs, makes the tourist service industry particularly attractive to the younger Drethians.

Conclusion

This brief inquiry began with the proposition that proletarianization is associated with the drastic expansion of any of the three basic sectors of production. The study of a single community in Crete provides evidence toward this direction, by looking at the actors, the short historical stages, and the processes that led to this type of social transformation through tourism expansion.

The set of processes that induced this transformation include the loss of part of the locals' subsistence base, the introduction of new economic activities reshaping employment opportunities, the establishment of a new socioeconomic structure, and the interplay of social psychological variables peculiar to tourism.

The outstanding feature of the swift change in the community's occupational structure is the increased labor supply of wage earners who lack control over the means of production. This lack of control is seen in the loss of part of their subsistence base and their absence from the tourist service industry as capital asset owners. Therefore, proletarianization in Drethia means much more than just changes in the community's occupational structure.

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