

“Market economy or an economy of society? Strategies and social actions for the cultivation of the olive in Southern Peloponnese (Laconia Greece) *in changing times*”

ABSTRACT

Olives and olive oil are undoubtedly among the most characteristic products of the Mediterranean area as their long history and presence in the region denote. For Greece they are also two of the most important commercialized and exportable products, “goods” of a special real and symbolic significance.

As a result of this, various state and private mechanisms, emanating from the European and globalized character of the economy, present on the local level as well as in the form of cooperatives, have been set up for the protection, promotion and distribution of these products. These mechanisms are often in competition with one another as they move in opposite directions, reinforcing and expressing different trends, some focusing on the economic aspect (state, business, monopoly actions) and the market at large, while others focus on the social aspect (local, cooperative actions) and the maintenance of the social fabric working primarily on the aspect of locality.

What strategies and practices does the local society deploy in order to enhance the market’s social character? How are basic social principles such as reciprocity, solidarity, cooperation used today so as to consolidate the “local” versus the “globalized”?

These are the issues the present paper will be dealing with using as a case study the region of S. Peloponnese (Lakonia especially), where the ethnographic study traced and interpreted the local society practices and resistances vis a vis the dictates of the liberal globalized economy.

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