D.339.194:633.71(495-15)

Dimitris Yannakopoulos (Greece)
University of Ioannina
e-mail: ajjadamo@gmail.com

SUBSISTENCE, ILLICITNESS AND TOBACCO IN A SMALL GREEK TOWN

Abstract: In the rural area of Agrinio, in Western Greece, landscapes, monuments and infrastructures, reveal the deep connection between land, people and the cultivation of tobacco. This connection was disrupted in 2006, when the implementation of national and EU policies resulted in a situation described as "the end of tobacco" (Kamberis 2016: 44-45). Since 2011, many inhabitants, previously engaged in the traditional economic practice of tobacco growing, begun to offer for sale their product once again. However, adapting to the current economic hardships, they cultivate and sell tobacco away from any intervention of the state, avoiding the taxes it imposes and bypassing the middlemen who benefit the most, when selling is legitimate. They establish thus a 'shadow economy'. Aiming to sell greater amounts and maximize their profit, they activate extended social networks, usually based on kinship or friendship, that often range statewide in memoranda Greece. Research conducted on the field indicates that tobacco producers take advantage of the gaps between legality and illegality that appear as an outcome of the absence of the state as a regulatory agent in a moment of generalized crisis. The result is a livelihood based on the production of new, local perceptions of legality, morality and value.

Key words: Tobacco, illicit economy, morality, economic crisis, free market, rural Greece.

In the city of Agrinio and its surrounding countryside, abandoned fields, warehouses, monuments, everything informs of the deep relation between tobacco-growing and the 80,000 inhabitants of the area. Tobacco, in this region, is classified as a basic economic resource that also defines the local cultural identity. As a natural consequence of its production and commercial promotion, a web was spun with Agrinio as its urban center, surrounded by small and larger villages. An interesting semantic emblazonment of this situation is that, when people of the countryside are referring to Agrinio, they simply use the adverb "inside" ("mésa").

The relative prosperity that people have experienced since the beginning of the 20th century came along with a linear understanding of life, dominated

by an aspiration of seamless improvement of, family and communal, everyday life. This perception of livelihood was supported, until 2006 by a deeply-rooted professional occupation: the cultivation of tobacco. Since the 1990s though, this reality started to change. Due to state and EU subsidy cuts, coupled with expropriation of tobacco-growing licenses, production gradually diminished and was, by the year 2006, completely eliminated. This is described as "the end of tobacco" in the prefecture of Aitoloakarnania.

With the emergence of the economic crisis, dangers that remained dormant, such as unemployment and poverty came to the fore colliding with inhabitants' previous expectations, which were formed in conditions of prosperity and economic growth. Although, after the implementation of EU's CAP (Community Agriculture Policy) and the manifestation of economic crisis, the blow was common for all, impact and choices of reaction vary. Ethnographic data demonstrates how tobacco-growers revised their views on economy and redrafted their expectations, as the image of perpetual economic growth proved to be dissolved. Thus, it is not a surprise that in the current economic circumstances many of these people, historically identified as tobacco-growers, turn to what they have *"always been doing"*. Making use of family farming comparative advantages they turn, once again, to the cultivation of tobacco. Many of them however, doing so, create an informal, "grey" economy,[1] taking the risk of undeclared cultivation and illicit trade of the tobacco they produce. This turn to an illicit practice as a subsistence strategy, presents a number of moral and cultural particularities with important research interest.

This article aims to de-neutralize legality and its socio-political construction. Namely, to reveal the ways actors are attempting to negotiate it, strategically connecting legitimacy with notions of rights and morality. Economic crisis is undoubtably a key-element in this exploration since it has been a catalyst for the development of this informal economy. The activation of kin or friendship networks, often extending outside the region, is crucial for this venture to be successful. Tobacco-growers of Agrinio create an informal market attempting to avoid the consequences of free-market policies' implementation. By doing so, they seem to simultaneously accept and challenge the market as a dominant institution of modern capitalism. Thus, an opportunity to examine the degree of capitalist integration of this rural population in this particular circumstance becomes apparent. Unavoidably, during this discussion, issues concerning ideology and power relations are expected to emerge.

Although farmers have rarely realized it, tobacco-growing has been overlong their link to the surrounding, national –and global– economic and political activity.[2] Keith Hart highlights that, new forms of uncertainty

1 As Pardo marks, in such socio-economic environments, where livelihood isn't secured, "ordinary people operate in the 'grey area' between 'legality' and 'illegality' without becoming or considering themselves as 'real criminals". (Pardo 1996: 20).

2 It is stimulating to discover similarities that developments concerning tobacco-cultivation in different social and economic environments present. Tobacco-producers in Kentucky are facing similar problems due to the reduction of the production and the

are expected to be created when capitalism is introduced into traditionally agricultural societies due to "value changes" in a neoliberal world (Hart 2012: 19). In a socio-economic context, marked by the implementation of austerity, coupled with CAP neoliberal policies, uncertainty compel diversification and adoption of short-term, opportunistic solutions.[3] Banister stresses that "from petroleum to 'pirated' music to basic services like electricity, sanitation and water, people across the planet depend upon and are tied into shadow markets of all kinds. The formal distinction between states and 'illegal' or 'illicit' activity therefore must also be troubled" (Banister, Boyce & Slack 2015: 364). Studying a similar context, characterized of alternative –again, local– conceptualizations of law, in a mountainous Cretan village, and focusing on whether such a diversification is antagonistic to the dominant ideology or not, Herzfeld notes that, although "it is not articulated in terms of the grand political theories of our time does not mean that it is not ideology" (Herzfeld 1985: 30). On the contrary, its cultural richness and the broad social consent it invokes, prove that it represents a behavior with a clearly political tone.

Space as a lived environment

According to Foucault, space should not be treated "as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile" (Foucault 1980:70). Collective memory literally establishes space, namely consolidates spatial interrelations, facing the challenge of heterogeneity of the present, through the confirmation of stability (Stavridis 1990: 17). Such a vision leads to a holistic perception, shifting from the whole to its components and finally to the reconstitution of social reality (Bada 2004). In our case, some of the once cultivated tobacco-fields, left idle for over a decade, become again productive. Of course, many features are nowadays different, and dictated by the economic crisis.

In this discourse, Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical concept of habitus could also be employed. "The habitus is the product of the work of inculcation and appropriation necessary in order for those products of collective history, the objective structures (e.g. of language, economy, etc.) to succeed in reproducing themselves more or less completely, in the form of durable dispositions, in the organisms (which one can, if one wishes, call individuals) lastingly subjected to the same conditionings, and hence placed in the same material conditions of existence" (Bourdieu 1977: 85). In that light, tobacco-growing is, in this region, treated as cultural and symbolic creation, constantly revalidating through interaction between behavior and structure. Thus, it comes as no surprise to

deregulation of the tobacco-market. Ann Kingsolver describes them as disappointed and unwilling to adapt to the new reality which is marked by the absence of tobacco (Kingsolver, 2011).

3 Knight (2015) studies the "irrational" and opportunistic investment of valuable resources in renewable energy programmes during the crisis, especially photovoltaics in Thessaly.

discover that a broad consensus, concerning illicit tobacco-growing, is formed. It seems that in this landscape, shaped by tobacco culture, and marked by the present crisis, a response emerges as the result of collective processes, coupled with the affected social groups' demand for social justice and dignity.[4] This response is possible, due to the formation of a new, local type of legality, which is also based on the lived culture and history of the region. Tobacco is nothing less than a landmark, a symbol of this culture and history and of the way people perceive them.

In Agrinio, the cultivation of tobacco is documented since the 17th century (Bada & Aggeli 2008: 399). In the late 19th century, the small rural town is transformed to a commercial center mainly oriented to the flourishing production and sale of tobacco. Being Greece 's main export product, tobacco attracts an army of traders, brokers and foreign companies' agents. In 1878, in an exhibition of Greek products, which was held in Paris, Agrinio is represented by 'its flavored tobacco'. This cosmopolitanism progressively led to the emergence of a local, thriving tobacco-processing industry and finally shaped the image and the socio-economic life of the 60.000 inhabitant provincial city that is Agrinio until today.

Besides generic positive factors that led to this development, such as the climate conditions and the land quality, the surge of workforce played a crucial role. It is estimated that in the wider region of Agrinio, the settling of almost 9,500 refugees coming from Minor Asia took place from 1922 to 1924. Most of them were workers in the tobacco fields as well as in the tobacco stores of the city and women were not excluded. These people, particularly those originated from regions like Smyrni or Mpafra, were experienced tobacco workers and producers. Their presence enriched the tecniques of the indigenous population, contributing in the swift growth of production. At the same period, tobacco-workers are creating the first trade-unions, attempting to improve their living standards. Clashes between them and police forces, or even the army, are often and violent. In August 1926, a pregnant tobacco-worker, Vassiliki Georgandzeli, a refugee herself, gets killed and becomes the symbol of the workers' struggles in the region. Thus, through tobacco, people are developing an acute class-consciousness.

For the farming families of the rural surroundings, tobacco-cultivation and the relatively high revenues it returned, has been for a long period the only way to ameliorate their economic and social status. Working hard, they usually attain a homestead and create a livelihood based on tobacco-production. During the post-war period, new houses were built, others were renovated, electricity and fresh water were provided to every village, and many families' (younger) members achieved their highest goal: access to the university.

The "traditional", oriental, sun-cured crops (tsembéli and myrotháta) need almost no investments to be made and are suitable to grow on the dry and semi-mountainous land of some areas. Cultivation takes place in the period between

4 Narotzky (2016) notes that moral economy has become a powerful analytical tool that can be applied in different contexts. For a comprehensive overview of the term "moral economy", see Götz 2015.

May and August and the amounts of produced tobacco usually depend on the number of members each family disposes (4-5 persons is their average size). Women and children play a crucial role in all the stages of production, both in the tobacco-fields planting, at first, and gathering, later, the plant's leaves and at home stringing the leaves before they are air-cured. The intensity of work, especially during the planting stage, means, as elsewhere in the south,[5] seeking help from relatives, neighbors and friends. Naturally, this help comes along with the responsibility to be returned when needed. The word people use describing this process is "danikariés", which is a slung word meaning "lendings". The identity of the tobacco-grower is important because it comes with a feeling of self-worthiness, and above all, with the recognition of this worthiness in the community. The word for this situation is "nikokyris", meaning (in a rather wordy rendition) "a person dedicated to his family' s well-being".

In the 1980's, the cultivation of new, air-cured crops (virginia/burley) is introduced. Whilst this development, at first, meant higher prices and subsidies, proved to be the beginning of the end for tobacco in the region. These imported crops had higher demands on water, pesticides and fertilizers. Their cultivation is industrialized and the producer must make investments in machinery and hire (usually migrant) workers. The farmer, employing now people to work in the fields, is turned to a "boss". Simultaneously, women and children are released and for the first time, they have free time. The expectation for higher revenues proved, at first, to be true. However, the production was gradually diminished and in 2006, it finally stopped. It is important to note that subsidies connected to the cultivation of these crops, significantly smaller now than in previous years, are supporting many families until today, thirteen years since this the production collapsed. The main problem is that, according to the relative legislation, 2019 is the last year farmers are collecting this money.

Compliant to relative EU policies, Greek governments gradually implemented the stoppage of tobacco-cultivation in Agrinio. According to data collected from the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ESYE), in 2004, 14,572 families had abandoned the cultivation of *tsembéli*.[6] Especially in some of the mountainous areas, decline reached 96.2% in the period 1997-2004. The image is completed when we add approximately 2,500 families, who, until then, engaged in processing and trading tobacco.

5 Miladina Monova studying the tobacco-producers in Prilep, emphasizes on the dependence of house-based tobacco production, on kinship relationships (Monova 2015).

6 *Tsembéli* is an "oriental type" tobacco crop, which is cultivated in the area of Agrinio for over 150 years. Its cultivation is directly connected with important aspects of social life, such as class awareness or the integration of approximately 2,500 Minor Asia refugees after 1922. Furthermore, its influence in the region's culture is so significant, that Agrinio is often called "tobacco-town" (*póli tou kapnoú*).

Oriental tobacco cultivation in Agrinio (acres)

1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
41,395	39,375	37,617	33,463	29,458	26,757	21,867	-

Source: ESYE

Virginia/burley tobacco cultivation in Agrinio (acres)

1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
21,611	25,065	25,716	27,375	25,827	26,602	24,188	-

Source: ESYE

Since 2011, tobacco-growing takes a new form in Agrinio. Following the imposed, neoliberal transition of the country's economy, agriculture -and of course tobacco- passes from the family-farming phase to the contract-farming one. This means that farmers are treated as agents embedded in the free market, without any state intervention or regulation. They have to negotiate the quantity, quality and -more importantly- the price of tobacco, as "independent" businessmen facing powerful tobacco-trading companies. Naturally, the latter impose their terms, leaving farmers with no viable solution and leading them to poverty and marginalization. The remaining, officially recognized, tobacco-producers sign a contract with a merchant, who buys their crop at a price ranging between 3.50 to 4.50 euros per kilo. A four-member family can, in a good year, produce up to a ton of dry tobacco. Furthermore, they are obligated to abandon their traditional seeds ("tsembéli" and "myrotháta"), in favor of hybrid seeds of oriental tobacco, originally cultivated in Katerini, with higher commercial value ("Σ-53" and "Σ-79" are the most common among them). The income received in these cases, is modest and supplementary. As can be expected, the impact is significantly less.

Oriental tobacco cultivation in Agrinio (acres)

2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
-	944	919	1,846	1,540	1,686	1,796

Source: ESYE

Virginia/burley tobacco cultivation in Agrinio (acres)

2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
-	428	450	612	612	623	633

Source: ESYE

Farmers, who attempted new cultivations, soon discovered that cultivating other crops demanded investment of valuable resources and finally failed due to insufficient preparation or information. Such crops were kiwi, stevia, pomegranate and asparagus. In all these cases, though, very few farmers managed to make their plantations profitable. They were, of course, those who had access, on one hand to resources like land and capital to invest in infrastructures, and on the other to valid information, concerning subsidies and the market. Such conditions, however, are completely irrelevant to the reality the majority of the area's farmers are facing. The only viable choice for them, as an alternative to the tobacco cultivation, is to turn to another "local tradition": they plant olive trees. Due to the lack of a packing plant, and despite the good quality of both olives and olive oil, prices are low and the difference in the expected revenues is enormous. Therefore, it is hardly a substitution, but a choice that offers a small, complementary income to the family budget.

This reality is clearly depicted in the data concerning the variation of unemployment in Agrinio, in the last decades. Tobacco-cultivation's collapse in 2006, coupled with the lack of industry in the region, meant that thousands of people were left with no working options and choices. The data is clear.

Unemployment Variation

Year	1991	2001	2011
Municipality of Agrinio	-	4,949	8,347
Perfecture of Aitoloakarnania	8,225	10,671	16,663

Source: ESYE

Nevertheless, ethnographic data suggest that, since 2011, there is a remarkable production that the official data fail to illustrate. Inhabitants, reacting to the naked landscape of uncultivated tobacco-fields, retrieve from collective

memory and past generations' experience ways of dealing with moments of crisis. Simultaneously, the landscape marked with useless, nowadays, facilities, rusty machinery and its toponymy (all cultivable land in the area is defined as tobacco-fields *kapnochórafa*) plays an active role dictating particular strategies, aiming to mitigate difficulties. Space, alongside with collective memory, motivates people's turn towards a productive activity which has been closely linked with the improvement of their living conditions in the past. They once again find shelter in tobacco. Consequently, it is not a surprise that illicit producers choose to cultivate the "traditional" crops and only rarely some of them will turn to the imported crops, aiming to obtain a flavor similar to the western blends, and maximize selling.

These features, and mostly the fact that traditional crops don' t need no investments to be made, make these crops preferable among the illicit tobacco-producers. Cultivation is carried-out in the traditional manner also; this means that all family members, including women and children are engaged in it. The planting stage lasts from mid-May to mid-June and in July and August, the leaves are collected from the field, carried at home, stringed and then sun-dried. Afterwards, tobacco must be cut, packaged, (usually in plastic bags of 1 kilo). Cutting tobacco is not a problem since there are enough people in the area who are doing this job, usually charging 1 euro per kilo. Although the cutting-machines they use are mostly electric, in some occasions an old "haváni" may be still in use. Then comes the most difficult part: selling tobacco. Family, friends and neighbors are motivated for this reason. The range of the network each producer is able to activate in order to sell his tobacco, defines the success (or failure) of the whole project.

The following analysis is an attempt to explore some of the issues that are raised by the choice these people make in order to survive in a troubled socio-economic environment. The impeachment and re-configuration of what should be considered as legitimate, the emerging morality issues and, finally, the clarification of this activity' s special characteristics as a "shadow" market, are at the core of this exploration.

Illicitness

Contrary to previous theorizations of rural space, modern studies treat it as a field of continuous change and dynamic diversification. According to these views, resilience and persistence characterize the countryside and its peoples, along with their ability to cope diversifying their livelihood.[7] However, what was rarely studied is their competence in relocating on the legality-illegality

7 For a presentation of production-diversifying strategies deployed in rural Greece, and their outcomes over the last years see Kasimis and Papadopoulos 2013.

continuum,[8] trying to ensure themselves against a dire economic conjuncture. It is not a surprise to mention that there is a number of activities which, though considered as formally illicit or illegal, are nonetheless popular throughout the Greek countryside. Such activities are, for example, the production of alcoholic beverages at home, informal employment -mostly of migrants- in the plantations, poaching, illicit logging, etc. As might be expected, official data in such cases are remotely reliable, since they represent only a very small part of the ongoing activity.[9]

Official data

Year:	2016
Cases:	28
Arrests:	34
Seizures:	495.5 kilos of tobacco, 200 packets

Source: Agrinio Police Department[10]

According to the Greek law,[11] undeclared tobacco cultivation is illicit. It is specifically mentioned that producers are obliged to sign a contract with a tobacco-trading company and declare the accurate location and size of their plantations to the competent service (OPEKEPE).[12] Even so, it is a fact that never a fine was imposed in Agrinio for undeclared tobacco-growing. Things change dramatically in the second stage of the examined practice, that of illicit, unreported tobacco-trade. This activity is considered clearly illegal and is punished by fines, seizures, even imprisonment, depending on intercepted amounts of tobacco. However, among the people of Agrinio such notions of "illicitness" and "informality" are

8 Alternative conceptualizations of law, especially concerning rural areas are generally under-studied in Greece. However, some important studies and in-depth analyses have made the development of an essential theoretical framework possible. See in particular Damianakos 2003 and Herzfeld 1985.

9 Many researchers have reasonably doubted the accuracy of data concerning illegal or illicit activities. Such markets function under discression, even secrecy. Yet, in order to be lucrative they have to be visible in some way (Andreas & Greenhill 2010: 23-45). As Herzfeld stresses, illicit practices may structure types of stability and predictability, since factors like violence and danger, don' t promote an economic activity (Herzfeld 2009).

10 As research has showed, farmers' arguments about poverty and the common cultural background they share with them, lead many officials to a relatively tolerant attitude. They ordinarily avoid intervening, unless they are obliged to (e.g. during a random check on the road, or, mostly, after a denunciation). For further analysis, see Giannakopoulos 2017.

11 Joint Ministerial Decision 593/49825/14-04-2014.

12 Payment and Control Agency for Guidance and Guarantee Community Aid.

thought acceptable, due to cultural and moral arguments they advance.[13] In June 2015, during a discussion with a group of illicit tobacco-growers, in a village coffee shop near Agrinio, one of them stated:

> *We are told not to grow tobacco and we risk having troubles with the police. But if my children are starving and I can't feed them, I'll grow. It's legal and more than legal.*

The rest of them simply nodded in agreement and clinked their glasses. Our informant's words, offer a comprehensive outline of how Agriniotes, consciously decided in 2011 to move boundaries between what is licit and what is not, inventing new, particular types of morality and legality. This fluidity in their notions about legality constitutes the foundation of illicit tobacco cultivation and trade. Using E.P. Thompson's term, it's a process of legitimation.[14]

Legality seems, at first sight, quite clear. However, there is not a "natural" line separating law from illegality. The border is imaginary. As conceptions change, so do borders (Nordstrom 2007: 85). What is really interesting, is to examine how people think about and manipulate law, often according to its spirit, but sometimes against it. Illicit tobacco-growers emphasize on the acceptability of growing and selling tobacco, claiming that this practice allows them to survive in an unjust and corrupted socio-economic environment.

> *"They" have driven us here. That's why we do such things. If "they" were right, we wouldn't be starving. "They" are more illegal and that's why we're acting like this!*

Among these people, any definition of law is constantly disputed and reshaped. Understanding the importance of notions such as "right", "morality" or "value" in everyday life, reveals the way power relations are forged. While the state and other agents such as the tobacco industry or the mass media attempt to enforce their conceptualizations, inequality is produced. Farmers on the other hand, try to diminish this inequality, by redefining those words with competing meanings. The result is liquidity, a situation where any definition concerns a particular context. Thus, the same farmers who, during a conversation, insisted that *"We're not doing anything illegal"* later ended up saying: *"They' brought us to a point, where we have to become outlaws to survive"*.

Illicit tobacco-growers waver because they realize that any notion of law, finally, is related to production and perpetuation of injustice. From their perspective, the law has never accomplished its proclaimed function: to ensure

13 For an analysis on informality, and its significance in local economies, see Pardo 2004.

14 "By the notion of legitimation, I mean that the men and women in the crowd were informed by the belief that they were defending traditional rights or customs; and, in general, that they were supported by the wider consensus of the community"(Thompson 1971: 136).

justice and equality. Thus, emerges a necessity to politicize legality, in order to understand that law is not merely a neutral settlement mechanism, but is often used as an instrument of oppression and plunder (Mattei and Nader 2008: 16). Farmers suspect the systematic use of law by ruling elites, which they designate by the word "they", as a weapon to obtain their consent and finally marginalize them. Instead of limiting the interests of strong -political or economic- actors, allowing weak ones to seek refuge in justice, as in its traditional and highly positive justification, the rule of law becomes an oppressive agency of plunder oppressing the losers of social processes. The rule of law abandons its aspect of shield for the weak and it is transformed into a sword for the strong (Mattei and Nader 2008: 55). Reacting to this situation, the former instinctively move towards an alternative interpretation of the dominant narrative and turn to an informal "grey" economy, which is based on a crop, that operates as a cultural and social symbol in this area. This view reveals an interesting picture, where farmers don't appear as passive "puppets" in the hands of superior, fate-controlling powers. Instead, they can be seen as active agents, who shape socially and culturally valid structures in order to define (more than) their livelihood. They conclude that "*I just do the same thing as 'they' do…*" expressing their readiness to juxtapose their own sense of low to the de-legitimized (as unjust) official legality.

Morality

> *I never thought there would be a day that I couldn't afford to buy bread. If one can't feed his family, what is left for him to do? I'll grow some tobacco, sell a couple of kilos, to get around. To feed my little children!*

For illicit tobacco-growers, a primary concern in their talks is to justify their involvement in this, officially, illegal activity. Justification is achieved by invoking a series of moral arguments. Thus, their practice is initially moralized, and finally legitimized. As expected, poverty is a fundamental argument, used to prove the morality of their illicit practice. More precisely, poverty equates to the degree illicit tobacco-growing and trading is viewed as an upright profession. They emphasize on the low income they earn and their insecure livelihood. These assertions of small profit, support their allegations on the moral rightness, beside the economic necessity of selling tobacco. They claim that without this resource, their subsistence would be impossible. Thus, appears the sense of right, and specifically, the right to a viable livelihood.[15]

15 Researchers are problematizing the notion of "rights", exploring different meanings and uses of the term. (Goodale 2007).

> *The law isn't right at all. They catch a poor man, selling a kilo of tobacco to feed his family and they lock him in. What is the meaning of this? Don't we have the right to live?*

Social scientists, studying rural populations have suggested that constant invocation of the demand for "everybody to survive" originates from the communal imaginary, where all community members must be secured against unexpected, externally imposed turbulences and threatening situations.[16] Tobacco's symbolic power in Agrinio leads growers to the dominant and perpetuating perception, that they produce a harmless commodity, therefore something legitimate. From their point of view, it's a crop that they have the right to cultivate. In this course, they establish a distinctive regime of legitimacy, as discretionary compliance to state mechanisms of surveillance and control, coupled with their own, active participation on defining morality, allows them to put official law on constant dispute.

In the city of Agrinio and the rural hinterland around it, illicit tobacco-growing and trading is not only tolerated. It is accepted and even actively supported by a large majority of the inhabitants. Many of them purchase this smuggled tobacco, saving a considerable amount of money from an expense that tends to become a luxury. At the same time, they feel they are supporting a relative or a friend, who is in need.

> *It's all right, what they do. Anybody can see they're poor. And, at the bottom line, they're helping other poor people who, otherwise, wouldn't afford their cigarettes. What if it's illegal? Is this actually illegal? And the "above" are legal?*

As E.P. Thompson has argued, this consensus is grounded "upon a consistent traditional view of social norms and obligations, of the proper economic functions of several parties within the community, which, taken together, can be said to constitute the moral economy of the poor" (1971:136). Illicit tobacco-growers fully understand the negotiating stance they obtain, due to broad acceptance of such arguments. They strategically choose to attach moral weight to their practice, aiming to make it locally recognized as legitimate. An interaction is formed, between contradicting factors who bear out their influence, on official law on one hand, and on the other on an always present, and often more valid, sense of righteousness. Thus, legality isn't merely a "natural" mesh of rules and obligations. It rather emerges through practices and ideologies, as a complex of notions, interacting on the political, economic and cultural level and finally producing what people consider as legitimate (Andreas and Greenhill 2010).

16 Nitsiakos (2015) proposes the study of "traditional" forms of reciprocity, and stresses on their potential functionality in revealing the long-term cultural and economic reality of rural societies.

Participating in the free(?) market

As many studies have showed, (Petrou 2012, Kasimis and Papadopoulos 1994, 2013), family in rural Greece, as the basic productive unit, has always been characterized by its ability to modify production, consumption and work, trying to achieve subsistence within capitalism, though without being totally embedded. Closely linked to the surrounding economic activity, family had the opportunity to adopt differentiated strategies, such as, the activation, or not, of all its members, the employment of migrant workers, the investment of resources in new types of production. Thus, the image of static, "traditional" rurality is reversed and replaced by the notion of rural-urban continuum,[17] while rural landscape becomes a "theatre" of changes and mobility. An essential feature of Greek rural society is its historical openness and interconnection with urban centers.[18] The countryside is no longer considered as isolated or "retarded", regarding social transformations. It is rather viewed as part of an interwoven, including the city, network. A key-element of this interaction is undoubtably the market.

Illicit tobacco-growers, often refer to their practice as "free-selling" or just "selling". Of course, using the adjective "free", they don't mean the same thing as the persistently, over the last decades, promoted by international organizations and Greek governments, "free-market". However, the argument in both perceptions is (ironically) the same. Being aware of the state's gradual retreat from any regulatory role, farmers create a "grey", nonexistent in official statistics, market, which is regulated by market laws. The collapse of the anemic welfare system during the present economic crisis, amplified the "legitimacy" of this turn. Thus, they seem to accept neoliberal imperatives, interpreting them in a discretionary manner. As Ong highlights, we should conceptualize neoliberalism, "not as a fixed set of attributes with predetermined outcomes, but as a logic of governing that migrates and is selectively taken up in diverse political contexts" (Ong 2006: 3).

> *I'd like to be protected by the state. I hear from a cousin who lives in Sweden, there's an unemployment benefit of 1,000 euros per month. And much more... But such things don't exist here. So, I'll grow some tobacco for selling. This way I'm free. I don't have the state, nor any company as a partner. I'm the boss!*

In this narrative, smuggling tobacco is a means of compensating lost or diminished income. A strategy that highlights, on one hand the state's incompetence to provide a safe socio-economic environment, and on the other, the independency of these people, and their ability to cope without committing

17 The term was introduced by Robert Redfield but its use has proved to be fruitful in many different contexts. See Redfield 1956.

18 For further analysis on the historical interconnection between rural and urban areas in Greece, see Damianakos, Nitsiakos, Zakopoulou & Kasimis, 1997.

to state policies.[19] What is implied here is that, since circulation of tobacco is legitimate, the procedure is acceptable and licit. Blurring the border between legality and illegality, allows these people to identify themselves as professionals, "normal" members of their communities.

The price of the smuggled tobacco, ranges between 15 to 40 euros per kilo, depending on the distance between the place it's finally sold and the village it was originally produced. Generally, it is lower, if the tobacco is bought near Agrinio and raises by analogy of the distance. The most difficult stage of this activity is building a network of potential sellers and buyers. Only if this precondition is fulfilled, can a tobacco-grower see the results of his efforts. For such a network to be created, a farmer must activate kinship and/or friendship relations, with people who live and work outside the community borders. Big cities and remote places are their main goals.[20]

> *The most difficult part is to find buyers. You need a "chain". How should someone in Crete know that you're selling? So, you need help. I have a cousin who lives in Athens and helps me find people to buy. It goes like this… Always the family!*

These "helpers" are usually taxi or bus-drivers, students, people who visit regularly and maintain their bonds with the community, but live or work away. In these cases, the farmers sell an amount of (usually) a few kilos and the transporter will try to re-sell it, hoping for a small profit of his own.[21] Informal production and circulation of tobacco, although compliant to supply and demand, is based on non-productive relations such as kinship or community ties.

Informal economies, often are perfect manifestations of the supply/demand principle. As Comaroff and Comaroff stress, "with market fundamentalism has come a gradual erasure of received lines between the informal and the illegal, regulation and irregularity, order and organized lawlessness". Of course, "great

19 Theodossopoulos, heavily drawing on Herzfeld, concludes that, "with irony, humor, and an astute political awareness, Greek local actors caricature national and international leaders, draw attention to the irresponsibility of the powerful and often explain world politics in a manner that vindicates others and exonerates themselves". (2013: 202).

20 An in-depth analysis of the term "network" and its significance to anthropological thought is not a purpose of this article. However, it is useful to note that the approach here, coincides with what Narotzky proposes: "the two fundamental properties of networks are multiple interconnections and chain reactions. Moreover, it is interesting to note two ideas that accompany the network concept: strategies and transactional social relations". (1997: 75).

21 "Using the household as the reference unit it could be said that networks of households with employed members provided a higher number and a more diverse range of connections and thus multiplied work opportunities. Social networks have proven to be crucial in the circulation of information concerning employment and more generally work -whether formal or informal- and in establishing specific work relations". (Narotzky 1997: 76-77).

profit is to be made in the interstices between legitimate and illegitimate commerce, between the formal and underground vectors". These informal markets "are often the most perfect expressions of the unfettered principle of supply and demand" (Comaroff, J. and Comaroff, J. 2006: 5). From this perspective, it is interesting to examine the development of rivalry among the illicit tobacco-growers, since this rivalry can be explained as an adaptation to free-market rules.

> *They turn in (karfónoun) each other these days. This is the main problem now! They take each other's eyes off! In the place of a real man who dies, ten "snitches" are born!*

There is also a practical reason for this antagonism: in a limited market, buyers are also limited. When a producer claims a disproportionate "piece of the pie", throws the whole system off balance. Consequently, he loses the communal support, while his behavior is stigmatized as immoral and corrupted. Furthermore, there is a well-founded fear that if control is lost, state mechanisms will tighten their surveillance, putting this necessary income in danger.

Ethnographic data suggests that, growers explicitly reject neoliberalism and its consequent social distortion. It proves though, their readiness to adopt notions such as rivalry, risk, demand and supply, and mostly arbitrariness, as means to establish a "free" market. However, instead of unquestioned acceptance, they proceed to an alternative conceptualization, ending up effectively competing them. In this sense, their familiarization with market, proves to be a powerful weapon in their attempt to avoid marginalization.

Conclusions

By alternatively evaluating and defining notions of legality and morality, the illicit tobacco-growers of Agrinio attempt to overcome obstacles of assuring family and community subsistence. This diversification is the basis, upon which a consensus is grounded. Thanks to the latter, illicit tobacco-growing and trading is justified, moralized and, finally "legitimized". Cultivation of tobacco appears to be a lived environment, constituted of inherent expectations, expressed as rules that define limits of the use of law and of pressures it entails.

Appropriation of fundamental neoliberal imperatives, such as trust on free-market and competition, means that illicit tobacco-growers understand the terms of the on-going social and economic shift that has started well before, and continues during the economic crisis. However, their choice to defy official law proves their detachment and will to avoid marginalization. They remain on a threshold, on a "grey" zone, where, under the pressure of vital necessities, they act, not as ideologists but as simple farmers. They settle with an opportunistic strategy, even if it is not pleasant to them. The convenience of their choice may be the cause of their indifference to collective, organized action.

The turn to illicitness may be conceived as an attitude, which creates some kind of movement, since it is founded on specific moral, cultural and social terms, succeeding to "quietly" establish a second, complementary to the official, level of legitimacy. Tobacco-growers of Agrinio choose a covert reaction, turning to informal economy. Thus, total control over a familiar resource, allows them to situate themselves in a space where subsistence is secured in a way that is relatively free of any regulatory surveillance.

References

Andreas, P., Greenhill, K. 2010. *Sex, Drugs, and Body Counts, the Politics of Numbers in Global Crime and Conflict*. Ithaka – London: Cornell University Press.

Bada, K., Aggeli, M. 2008. „The Women of Tobacco". *The Language of The Mother in History, New Cultural Itirenates,* Trono, A., Rizzelo, K. & Ruppi, F. (eds). 399–412. Lecce: Edizioni del Grifo.

Bada, K. 2004. „Towards a Cross-Disciplinary Approach of Society and Culture". *Aspects of Anthropological Thought and Research in Greece*. 275–289 (на грчки језик). Athens: Greek Society of Ethnology.

Banister, M. J., Boyce, A. G., Slack, J. 2015. „Illicit Economies and State(less) Geographies: The Politics of Illegality". *Territory, Politics, Governance* 3(4): 365–368.

Bourdieu, P. 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Comaroff, J., Comaroff, J. 2006. „Law and Disorder in the Postcolony: An Introduction". *Law and Disorder in the Postcolony*, Comaroff J., Comaroff J., (eds.). 1–56. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Damianakos, St. 2003. *Tradition, Rebelion and folk culture*. Athens: Plethron.

Damianakos, St., Nitsiakos, V., Zakopoulou, E., Kasimis, Ch. 1997. *Power, labor and memory in three villages of Epirus. The local dynamics of survival*. Athens: Plethron.

Foucault, M. 1980. „Questions on Geography". *Power/Knowledge, Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977 by Michel Foucault*, Gordon C. (ed.). 63–77. New York: Pantheon Books. Giannakopoulos, D. 2018. „'Illiciteness' and Survival: The Tobacco-Growers of Agrinio", on line magazine *O Kosmos*

tis Ergasias 5: 35–52 (на грчки јазик).

Goodale, M. 2007. „Locating Rights, Envisioning Law Between the Global and the Local". *The Practice of Human Rights: Tracking Law Between the Global and the Local*. Goodale, M., Merry, S. E. (eds.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1–38.

Götz, N. 2015. „'Moral economy': its conceptual history and analytical prospects". *Journal of Global Ethics* 11: 147–162.

Hart, K. 2012. „A Note on Arjun Appadurai's 'The Spirit of Calculation'". *Cambridge Journal of Anthropology*, 30(1): 18–24.

Herzfeld Michael, 2009, «Essentialism is today more dangerous than ever...», *εγχειρίδιον*: http://encheiridion.blogspot.gr/2009/01/blog-post_4370.html

Herzfeld, M. 1985. *The poetics of manhood: Contest and Identity in a Cretan Mountain Village*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Kamberis N., 2016. *Standstill and Despare in rural Greece: Farmers' suicides. Research in the prefecture of Aitoloakarnania 1994–2008*. Athens: Academy of Athens (на грчки јазик).

Kasimis, C., Papadopoulos, A. 2013. „Rural Transformations and Family Farming in Contemporary Greece, Agriculture in Mediterranean Europe: Between Old and New Paradigms". *Research in Rural Sociology and Development* 19: 263–293.

Kasimis, C., Papadopoulos, A. G. 1994. „The Heterogeneity of Greek Family Farming: Emerging Policy Principles". *Sociologia Ruralis* 34: 206–228.

Kingsolver, A. 2011. *Tobacco Town Futures: Global Encounters in Rural Kentucky*. Long Grove, Ill: Waveland Press, Inc.

Knight, D. 2015. „Opportunism and Diversification: Entrepreneurship and Livelihood Strategies in Uncertain Times". *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology* 80(1): 117–144.

Mattei, U., Nader, L. 2008. *Plunder: When the Rule of Law is Illegal*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell.

Monova, M. 2015. „'We don't have work. We just grow a little tobacco': Household economy and Ritual effervescence in a Macedonian town". Gudeman, S., Hann, C. (eds.). *Economy and Ritual. Studies in Postsocialist Transformations*. New York/Oxford: Berghahn.

Narotzky, S. 1997. *New Directions in Economic Anthropology*. London: Pluto Press.

Narotzky, S. 2016. „Between Inequality and Injustice: Dignity as a Motive for Mobilization During the Crisis“. *History and Anthropology* 27(1): 74–79.

Nitsiakos, V. 2015. *Peklari: Small Scale Social Economy*. Ioannina: Isnafi (на грчки јазик).

Nordstrom, C. 2007. *Global Outlaws: Crime, Money and Power in the Contemporary World*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Ong, A. 2006. *Neoliberalism as a mobile technology*. Department of Anthropology, Berkeley: University of California.

Pardo, I. 1996. *Managing Existence in Naples. Morality, action and structure*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Pardo, I. 2004. *Between Morality and the Law*. London – New York: Routledge.

Petrou, M. 2012. „Rural immigration, family farm modernisation and reactivation of traditional women's farming tasks in Greece: masculinities and femininities reconsidered“. *South European Society and Policy* 17(4): 553–571.

Redfield, R. 1956. *Peasant Society and Culture*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Stavridis Stavros, 1990, *The Symbolic Relationship With Space: How social Values Shape and Interpret Space*, Athens: Kalvos.

Theodossopoulos, D. 2013. „Infuriated with the Infuriated? Blaming Tactics and Discontent about the Greek Financial Crisis“, *Current Anthropology* 54(2): 200–221.

Thompson, P. 1971. „The moral economy of the English crowd in the eighteenth century“. *Past & Present* 50: 76–136.