Returning from Sweden to Northern Greece

*What did the emigrants of the 1960’s bring back to Greece?*
The Gavra Village

- The population exchange in the 1920’s
- Resettled Caucasian Turkish-speakers
- A new Village in the 1920’s and 1930’s
- Tobacco growing – self-sufficiency
- War, Resistance (1941-1944)
- Civil War (1946-1949)
- Communist hegemony in the Village
- Surveillance, Repression, Self-organization
Greene, Thessaloniki, Gavra
The Early 1960’s - Emigration fever

- Poverty, Repression and Harassments
- “A window suddenly opened…” (1963)
- Passport without loyalty declaration
- A Few to Germany…. But…
- Bridgeheads in Sweden
- Massive emigration 1963-66 to Sweden
- Siblings, Cousins, Neighbours
- Young Families
Population in Gavra 1951-2001

Figure 1. Inhabitants in Gavra 1951-2001
From Tobacco Farmers to Workers

- The became industrial workers
- They lived in small communities
- Unskilled work in low-wage industries
- In declining sectors
- They were "needed" and "welcome" both at work and in the local communities
Strategies

- Work in order to save in order to return
- Both men and women worked full-time
- Accepted shift work and overtime
- Living simple and buying cheap – to save as much as possible
- Educating the children – in Sweden or in Greece
Isolation versus Integration

- Living a Greek everyday life in "a village cocoon"
- Active in Greek political organisations

Integrating forces
- Mainly through work
- Unions, and politics (1967!)
- Housing, neighbours
- The health and welfare services
What did the Gavra villagers bring back to Greece?

(1) Economic resources (their savings - and pension rights)

- Setting up business in Greek cities (Thessaloniki)
- Investing in city apartments
- Building a new house in Gavra
(2) New habits, *habitus*, political identity

*Longterm effects of the first meeting with Swedish officials*

- The welcoming railway official in 1964 (the contrast to uniformed Greek officials)
- The helpful local police officer (immigration control)
- Employment service official (blank work permits when vacationing in Gavra)
Traces of the emigration (1975)
Photos from a tour in the Village
A Garden in Gavra
Modern Greek House
Swedish style Garden
The Lawnmover
Smoking forbidden!
Leaving your shoes...
Modern and Rational vs Personalised and Traditional

Effects of adaption to Swedish mores after returning to Greece

Formal equality as a new yardstick not personalised, privileged access
- Queuing in shops and banks
- Selective access to public officials,
- And also with doctors…
Experiences of less authoritarian public services

- Health services (better quality, more dialogue)

- Welfare services (Housing, social insurance offices – pensions)
"A Fair Deal"

At the micro-level of Work:

• “I’m working hard, I know my rights, and don’t accept to sent around to the hopeless jobs. When I protested I got a fair treatment” (1970)

• “I’m a good worker and I’m respected as such”
Fair deal at the Macro-level

• “Sweden needed us and we needed jobs and income”.
• “It was in Sweden that I became a political subject and understood what it was to be a citizen.”
• the Swedish state “was not only Theirs (i.e. the Others) but that is was also Ours”…
• “The state is also you and me.”
Accepted as a Citizen

- Swedish public services contrasted with their memory of Greece in the early 1960’s
- Less distance between officials and citizens
- Absence of structural political-economic discrimination (jobs, surveillance etc)
- But not only a rosy picture ....