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Contesting national belonging: An established-outsider figuration on the margins of Thessaloniki, Greece

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Acknowledgments

Writing a PhD dissertation is a rather lonely enterprise, yet one that crucially depends on the advice, feedback, encouragement, support and inspiration one draws from other people. It is also long journey – a journey that begins even before one consciously takes the decision to embark on it. You pass along a chain of people and events that guide you on a certain pathway, and which eventually leads to the production of your book. Writing the acknowledgements section is possibly the happiest moment in this long journey – the moment you are finally able to express your gratitude to those who helped make your dissertation what it is, and who made it possible in the first place. Before I turn to the wonderful people I have encountered on my academic journey so far, I first take this opportunity to thank my parents Pavlo and Lamprini, from the bottom of my heart, and for everything; not only for infusing me with curiosity, the will to learn and a spirit of critical thinking, but most importantly for all those years of love and support.

My engagement with the social sciences began during my studies in Geography at the University of the Aegean on the magical island of Lesbos. I wish to thank my teacher Lila Leontidou for enthusiastically dragging me into the world of social science, and my supervisor Dora Lafazani for shaping my academic interests in nationalism, ethnicity and migration. It was from her impassioned teaching and working groups that I truly learned how to do research and how to think as a social scientist; and it was in those meetings that I arrived at my decision to continue my studies. I also want to thank my teacher Theano Terkenli for being such an inspiring professor and a source of support, both throughout my years in Lesbos and also in subsequent phases.

The four dreamy years I spend in Lesbos are a beacon in my life. The memories I retain are a reminder of how I should always try to live my life. But that is not always possible. One thing that I miss from that period is the engagement with non-academics regarding my academic concerns. The PhD trajectory pushes you towards an introverted academic world. In Mytilene, I did not only study in classrooms; I communicated, practised, and tested the knowledge I obtained outside the academic world, with people in the streets and in the fields. I wish to thank all my friends from my Mytilene years who shared this experience with me; although I no longer see them often, I still feel them to be part of my family.

In order to expand my sociological knowledge in my fields of interest, I followed the MA program in Migration and Ethnic studies at the University of Amsterdam. My studies were supported by a Nuffic Hyugens scholarship. At the University of Amsterdam I found a very inspiring academic environment, and met great fellow students with whom I shared a rather intense year. I learned a great deal from them, as well as from my teachers, especially, Jan Rath, who also was the coordinator of the MA program, and Flip Lindo and Philomena

Essed, my wonderful supervisors. The encouragement of those three professors was crucial to my decision to continue my academic career. Jan Rath and Flip Lindo later became the supervisors of my PhD project. To them I owe wise guidance, criticisms and comments, which helped me throughout this expedition. I also want to thank them for their support, interest and confidence in me and my research. I feel so privileged to have had them as supervisors in my PhD journey.

While the Hyugens scholarship was what initially brought me to Amsterdam for my MA, the continuation of my studies here is due to Flip Lindo. After my MA, Flip proposed that I work as a researcher on a project he and my future colleagues were then developing – an effort that later materialized as the GEITONIES project. The idea of working with Flip again was incredibly exciting. It was also a major reason for me starting this PhD. Taking the exams for the IKY (Greek State Scholarships Foundation) postgraduate scholarship program became a way for me to hasten the onset of our collaboration, at a time when the start of the formal project faced delays.

I cannot imagine my PhD journey without Flip. He has had an enthusiastic and active engagement in every stage of this project and was an endless source of support and inspiration. I admired the clarity and sharpness of his thought and the originality of his criticism, which challenged my ideas and helped me be what I am as a social scientist. He has been clearly the most prominent figure in my academic career; and more than that, he is also a beloved friend with whom I have shared life in and outside academia over recent years. We conducted ethnographic field research as well as quantitative research together, have taught alongside each other, and have also spent long evenings together with plenty of alcohol, attended concerts and performances, travelled, and spent many important days in each others' company. Flip, thank you for everything.

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I am also grateful to my colleagues at IMES and AISSR, especially Blanca, Aimee, Anja, Apostolos, Marlene, Sébastien Mies, Martha, Daniele and Juno, and my lovely roommates Marieke and Duske. Femke also deserves a special mention. Her insights led to so many improvements to my book in the final months that I think life could have been easier in many respects if we had met and worked together earlier. However, I feel lucky that I did meet her at all, and for that I am indebted to Robert van Krieken and Bart Heerikhuizen and the inspiring intensive course they put together on Elias. I also want to thank them, as well as Prof. Michael Banton, Prof. Hans Vermeulen and Prof. Effie Voutira, for their valuable feedback, input and support at different phases in my PhD research. Finally, I want to thank Prof. Lois Labrianidis and my colleagues Pano Hatziprokopiou and Niko Vogiatzi

for making my participation in the GEITONIES project a joy and something I could happily combine with my own research.

Besides the academic community, I want to thank a number of people who were greatly important to me during recent years. Due to a series of unexpected events, at one point in the process I myself became an object of my own study. With that I do not mean that I was so immersed in my study that I could not separate my private life from my PhD, but rather that I myself became a migrant. I had to take a number of jobs, which people think of and speak about as ‘migrant jobs’, in order to support the final phase of my PhD project at a time when returning to Greece was not an option. Although academically this was an invaluable experience to better understand what I am studying, the lack of time resulting from this experience made life stressful. I want to thank Christina, my cousin Antonis, Thanasis, Yannis and Elif for helping me find my balance and retain my motivation in this period.

In Amsterdam, I also want to thank Margriet as well as Vasili, Elena, Vasiliki, Olga and Tikitu whom I missed after their return to Greece. In Thessaloniki, for helping me maintain a life besides my ethnography, I owe grateful thanks to Niko, Ladaki and Yorgo and all the groupa crew; stopping playing music has been one of my biggest sacrifices during the hectic and stressful life the last two years. I can’t wait to start playing again. I also want to thank my parents’ siblings, especially my aunt Athena, my uncle Takis and my godfather Zacharias.

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