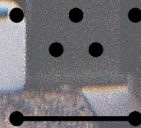


A photograph of a cemetery in a forest of bare trees. The scene is dimly lit, with a person in a blue jacket and dark pants standing near a tombstone in the middle ground. The trees are tall and thin, with bare branches reaching towards a pale sky. The ground is covered in dry leaves and dirt. The overall mood is somber and quiet.

Tracing life in the fire-altered landscape of Greece

A travelogue to the village of Kirki

Ina Patsali



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Today, I embarked on a journey that I never anticipated - an exploration of a village ravaged by the merciless claws of a wildfire. The air was thick with the scent of charred wood and the remnants of once vibrant life, as I cautiously stepped into the desolate landscape.

As I traversed the eerily quiet streets, the magnitude of the destruction became increasingly apparent. The skeletal remains of houses, their walls reduced to mere ash, stood as silent witnesses to the ferocity of nature's wrath. The remnants of lives once lived, now reduced to rubble and memories etched in the scorched earth.

Nature's artwork painted a somber picture as the landscape seemed to bleed into shades of black and gray. Trees, once proud and towering, now stood like solemn sentinels, their branches skeletal and devoid of life. The ground beneath my feet crunched with each step, a stark reminder of the fragility of the ecosystem that once thrived here.

The village's once vibrant colors had been replaced by the monochrome palette of destruction. The contrast between the untouched sky above and the charred ground below was a poignant reminder of the transient nature of life. Birds circled overhead, their melancholic cries echoing the sorrow that seemed to hang heavy in the air.

Despite the devastation, signs of resilience emerged amidst the ruins. Sprouts of green pushed through the blackened soil, a testament to nature's ability to heal and rejuvenate. It was a small glimmer of hope in a landscape dominated by despair.

As I continued my exploration, I couldn't help but reflect on the fragility of human existence and the impermanence of the structures we build. The village, once a vibrant community, now lay in ruins, its heartbeat silenced by the roaring flames that swept through its streets.

As the sun dipped below the horizon, casting a warm glow on the desolate landscape, I left the village behind, carrying with me the echoes of its past and the hope for a future where the scars of the wildfire would fade and life would once again bloom from the ashes.

Introduction

Geologists have begun to call our time the Anthropocene, signifying the period in which human activities surpass other geological forces in their impact on the Earth. The term is still relatively new and comes with intriguing contradictions. While some view the name as suggesting human triumph, the opposite appears to be more accurate: humans have, without planning or intention, created a mess on our planet.¹ Moreover, despite the prefix “anthropo-” indicating human, the mess does not result from our species’ biology. The most compelling Anthropocene timeline doesn’t originate with our species but rather with the rise of modern capitalism.² This economic system has been a driving force behind the extensive destruction of landscapes and ecologies over long distances.

This is why Stephen J. Pyne, a professor emeritus at Arizona State University specializing in the history of fire, and former wildland firefighter, suggests we have “the fire-informed equivalent of an ice age.”³ We have a Pyrocene. The Pyrocene introduces a viewpoint centered on fire, illustrating how humans play a pivotal role in shaping the Earth. It proposes a renaming and redefinition of the Anthropocene based on humanity’s primary ecological imprint: our capacity to control and manipulate fire. This concept is accompanied by a narrative that traces the enduring alliance between humans and fire throughout history.⁴ Like fire, the Pyrocene integrates its geographic, historical, institutional, and intellectual surroundings. It addresses the search for a usable future.

Over the past few years, fires are everywhere. In 2020, a surge of smoke and flames swept across the West Coast, scorching over 10.2 million acres and leading to the second and third-worst smoke days in U.S. history. (With New York City’s orange Wednesday in the top spot.)⁵ A mere six months earlier, Australia endured what is now referred to as the Black Summer—a prolonged period of bushfires that forced native wildlife to flee and enveloped lush coastal cities with wildfire smoke.⁶ This summer of 2023, the biggest wildfire recorded in

Europe torched large swaths of Northern Greece; fire destroyed ecosystems and devastated local communities.

This record-sized wildfire has transformed a pristine forest into an eerie, moon-like landscape and prompted mass evacuations of populated regions, leaving behind a group of 18 immigrants dead, including children, who have sought refuge in the forests, trying to cross the Greek–Turkish borders.⁷ This fire also threatens the cultural heritage in a region renowned for the remnants of ancient civilizations and the pleasures of modern tourism, at the crossroads of two continents⁸.

Out of the 93,500 hectares burned, 60% was wildland of great ecological significance at European level. The burned area was a forest primarily dominated by pine trees, featuring a diverse habitat mosaic, including unique and rare species of flora and fauna native to both Europe and Asia⁹. Situated along one of the most crucial migration routes for birds in the Western Palearctic, the region boasted old-growth forests, rocky outcrops, meadows, and fields interspersed within the wooded landscape, making it a great tourist attraction and a sanctuary for dozens of species of birds and plants¹⁰.

A significant portion of the Dadia Forest has been scorched to the point where experts are concerned that its supposedly safeguarded ecosystem might never be able to regenerate. According to experts, Dadia “will never be the same as we once knew it.”¹¹ In a time of crisis, when Greece was fighting dozens of fires at a time, a national debate was fueled over causes and responses. Authorities are attributing the wildfires to arsonists, with dozens of suspects having been apprehended and an unfortunate combination of extraordinarily hot, dry, and windy weather conditions.

This research paper is divided into two parts; the first part is based on fieldwork conducted in the fire-altered landscape in Evros, after spending time in Kirki village, hearing the stories of locals, having conversations with experts, and documenting my experiences living in the post-disaster land. It is a travelogue to a ground considered “ruined”, in a village slowly disappearing. The second part zooms in on Kirki’s cemetery, approaching it as the sole spiritual place for post-disaster relief in an effort to understand its importance for the community as well as the opportunities that arise in this burial ground. My travel was approached with a commitment to flexibility and was shaped by serendipity.

In this multilayered condition of Northern Greece, it is an effort to consider the question of what’s left in the post-fire land of Kirki and what emerges in its damaged cemetery.

Fire timeline

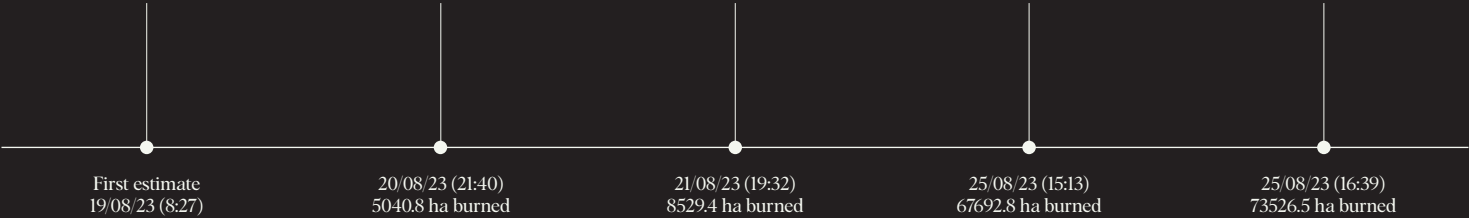


Fig.2-II Maps showing the timeline of the fire, found on:
<https://rapidmapping.emergency.copernicus.eu/EMSR686/>

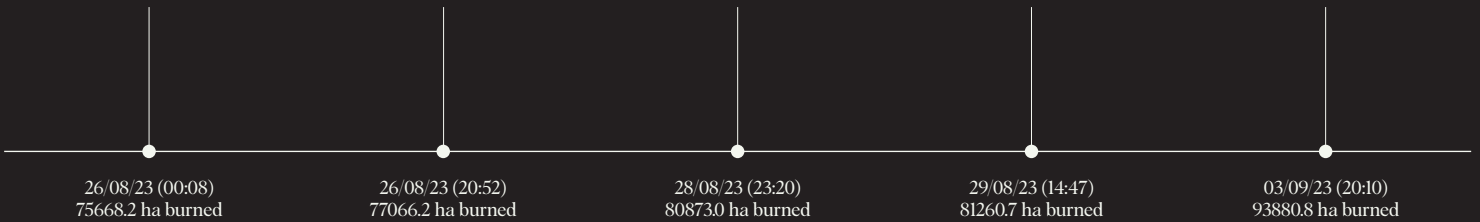
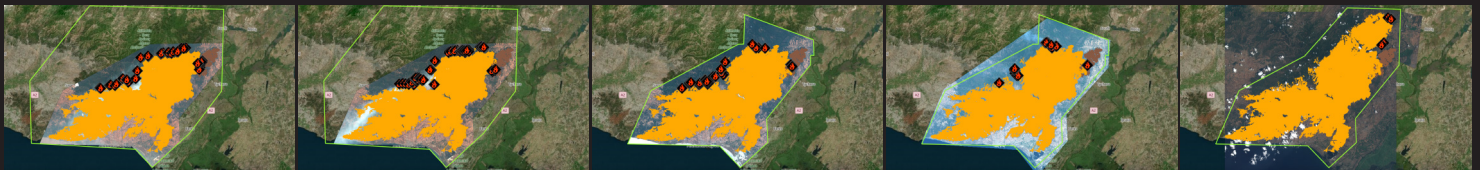


Fig.12-17 Pictures during the wildfire, found on:
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/sep/01/greek-wildfires-a-visual-guide>



APRIL 17 2019

The burned area was a forest of pine and centennial chestnut trees, a tourist attraction and a sanctuary for the Falco cherrug, and dozens of species of birds and plants.

Fig.18 Picture of Kirki before the fire. Photograph: Argyris Panagis

This summer of 2023, the biggest wildfire recorded in Europe touched large swaths of North Greece: fire destroyed ecosystems and devastated local communities.



AUGUST 21 2023

Authorities are attributing the wildfires to arsonists, with dozens of suspects having been apprehended.



AUGUST 29 2023

Fig.19 A local resident looks on at the wildfire approaching the village of Avantas, northeast of Alexandroupolis, Greece, on Monday, Aug. 21, 2023.

Photograph: Konstantinos Tsakalidis/Bloomberg—Getty Images

Fig.20 A firefighter runs as a wildfire intensifies near the village of Sidiro and Yannuli. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

A stop along the way, Kirki

A week before I visited the Dadia forest in Evros, I was still figuring out where to start. With over 93,500 ha burned, exploring the area as a whole is not an option, and choosing a starting point is not easy. After puzzling over what would be more meaningful to me and fruitful for my research, I traced the course of the fire and decided to start at the same point that the first flames appeared: empty green fields on the East of the village of Loutros. But my journey would soon change.

Approaching my trip with a commitment to flexibility, I allowed the unfolding events to shape my itinerary. Without a predetermined timeline or accommodation reservations, my sole plan revolved around meetings with two individuals integral to my research: Marios, a former firefighter, and Giannis, one of the individuals responsible for clearing the burnt trees in the surrounding area, both connected through a Facebook group of the village.

Driving through the burned land was a surreal and haunting experience, as the once vibrant landscape had transformed into a desolate and charred terrain. The skeletal remains of trees stood like solemn sentinels, their twisted branches reaching toward an ashen sky. The air carried a lingering scent of scorched earth, a reminder of the destructive force that had swept through. The monotony of blackened fields and the

absence of the vibrant hues that once adorned the surroundings created an eerie atmosphere. Once flanked by lush foliage, the road now traversed through a somber tableau of devastation. The remnants of structures stood as silent witnesses to the ferocity of the fire, their skeletal frames echoing the resilience of those who had faced the inferno. The journey through this scorched land served as a stark testament to the fragility of nature and the profound impact of such catastrophic events on the visual and emotional tapestry of the once-thriving landscape.

After a long drive, I decided to stop in the village of Kirki—not too far from my final destination. As I approached the outskirts of Kirki, a village now infamous for its encounter with the relentless wrath of a wildfire, a profound sense of foreboding gripped me. The air, thick with the acrid scent of scorched earth, foretold the story of devastation that awaited. My journey into the heart of the burned village began with a hesitant step onto a landscape forever altered.

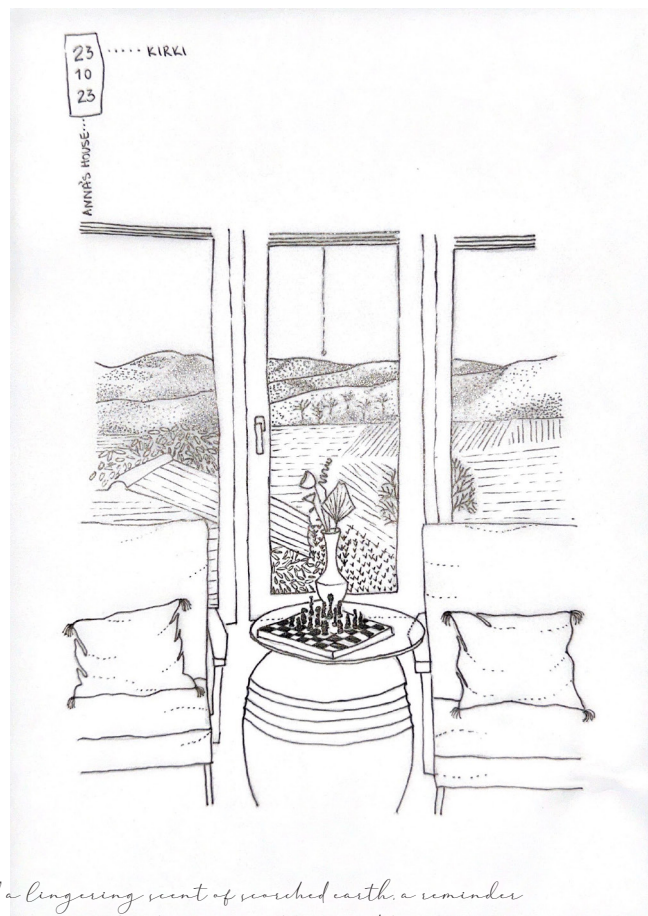
As I was looking for the “kafenio” of the village (the local traditional coffee place), I was approached by a woman, Anna, who “did not recognize the car,” as she said, and guessed I would need some help. Anna, an 80-year-old lady who has lived her entire life in the village, let me know that the kafenio is closed on weekdays, as the owners work on their land, and only open on the weekends. After I told her the reason for my visit, she offered to go to her house for a small stop before I went on my way.

The nearby village of Kirki experienced a slightly more favorable fate, at least initially. Although it was spared the first three days of the wildfire, the residents witnessed their homes being engulfed by flames on Friday, 25 August. Anna recounts, “I couldn’t turn the TV on because there was a full blackout. So, I had to learn the updates “mouth to mouth.” The village was surrounded by the fires and left a short time for evacuation. “All women and families quickly left when they had the

chance. Only some men stayed behind to protect their homes. I also stayed home; I wanted to be here with my belongings. Luckily, my house escaped from the fire.”

As we traversed from the car to Anna’s house, Kirki’s devastation left an indelible impression on me. The once verdant fields, now reduced to an ashen expanse, stretched before me. The skeletal remains of trees stood like solemn sentinels, their twisted branches reaching toward a somber sky. The remnants of structures, once homes to lively conversations and shared laughter, now stood as silent witnesses to the ferocity of the flames. Walking through this desolate tableau, the silence was overpowering—a stark contrast to the lively village life that once thrived here.

Despite the urgency to reach my final destination for my scheduled appointments, the haunting images of Kirki and the poignant words of its resilient residents lingered in my thoughts. It became evident that a return to Kirki was inevitable, a commitment to understanding and documenting the profound impact of the fire on this community.



The air carried a lingering scent of scorched earth, a reminder of the destructive force that had swept through. The monotony of blackened fields and the absence of the vibrant hues that once adorned the surroundings created an eerie atmosphere.



Driving through the burned land was a surreal and haunting experience, as the once vibrant landscape had transformed into a desolate and charred terrain.



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Fig.23-31 Pictures of Kirki before the fire.
Photographs: Argyris Panagis

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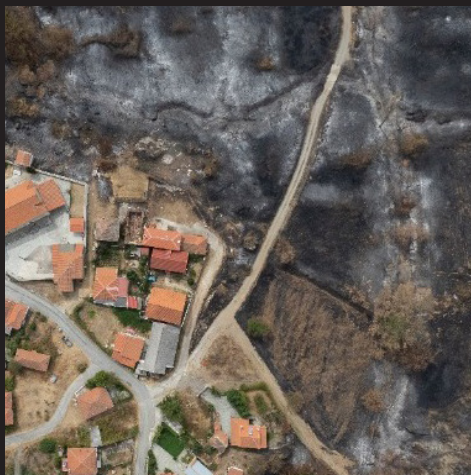
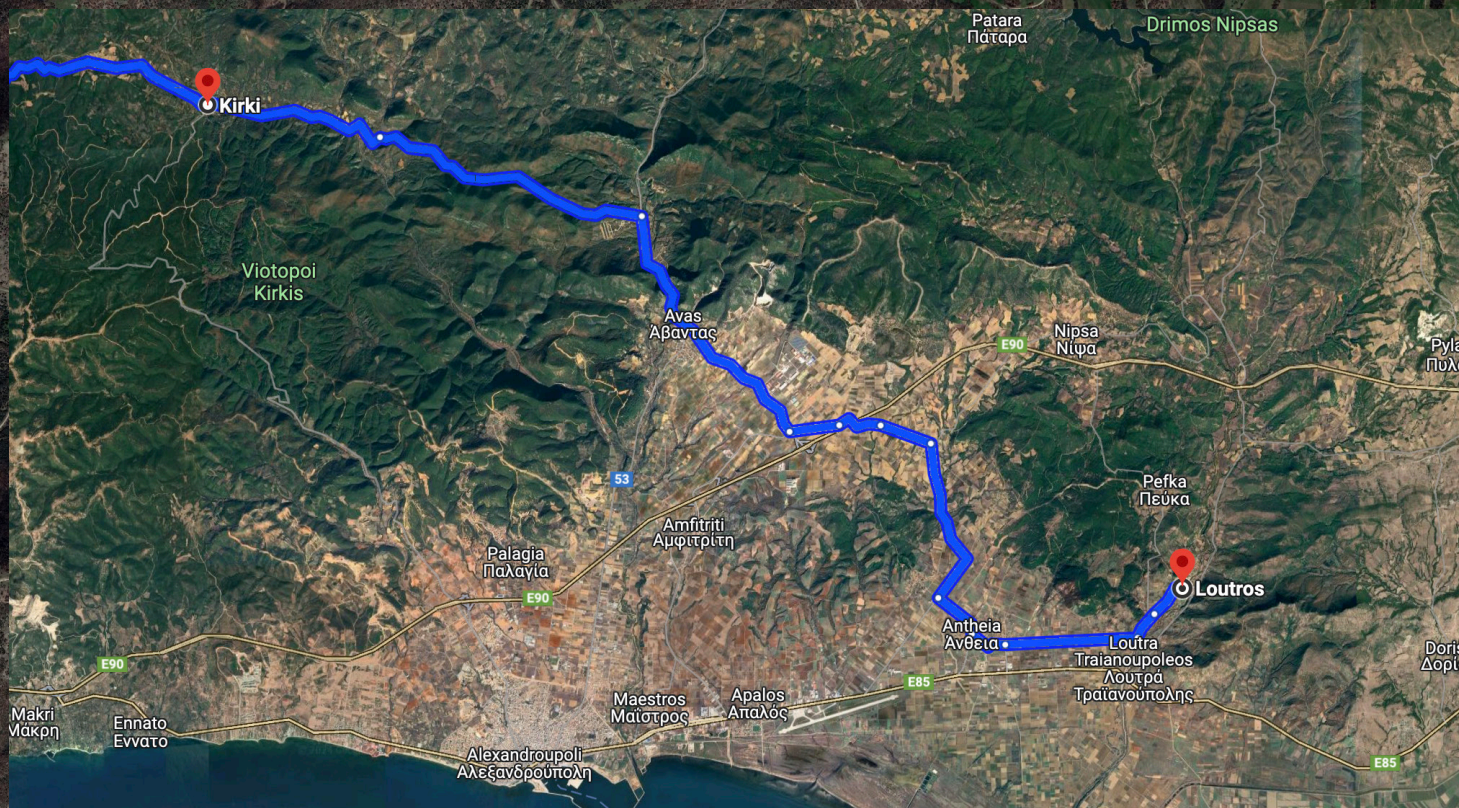


Fig.32-40 Pictures of Kirki after the fire.
Photographs: Achilleas Chiras/ Enikos.gr



LOUTROS



Recalculating route, Loutros

Eventually, hours after I started my trip, I arrived at Loutros. The village is located in a valley between two tall mountains, at a low altitude of 39m above sea level, and is crossed by a river. Its advantageous geological circumstances made it easier to keep the fire from reaching the village, and it ended up saving it. I knew it was not the location I was looking for, but I decided to spend some time there and find out.

At the local kafenio in Loutros, my meeting with the two men ended up much more than that.

Marios, the 68-year-old former firefighter is telling me how he was about to turn in for the night when the phone rang. On the other end was his cousin Thanasis, urgently conveying, “Do you not know that the town is on fire? Run!” Despite the news reports claiming the fire was 15 kilometers away, Marios stepped outside in only his underwear to verify. To his disbelief, above his house in the small village of Loutros, a “10-meter-high flare” illuminated the sky while “fireballs” descended like massive meteorites from the tree tops. In just a few hours, the flames threatened everything he had accumulated over a lifetime of work.

Despite the devastating loss, Marios still has a smile on his face. “How can I not be happy? If it weren’t for our village’s location, I could have been dead, and instead,

I’m alive, and so are my friends and family,” he reflects. Then, he adds, “We all still have our houses, our cars, our animals. We are very grateful for that.”

After people around us heard the topic of our conversation, they soon jumped in to contribute. “We were lucky enough that all of the houses in the village are intact,” says Giannis, the gardener responsible for cutting down the burned trees after the fire. “Some of our fields of crops were affected,” says another man, “but the important thing is that all of us are safe.”

Our conversation was about the fire, the broader area, and their lifestyle. Some of them showed me around the village as well. They told me about the history of Loutros, which was established in the 2nd century CE. The thermal baths (λουτρό – loutro – in Greek, thus the name of the village) may be the main ‘attraction’ of the area, but for me, there is a hidden, raw beauty in the village of Loutros: its winding alleys that descend to the calm river, accompanied by the comforting sight of smoke rising from chimneys. Residents warmly greet visitors with a cheerful “good evening” and a welcoming smile.

Amidst this picturesque scene, lush greenery thrives, with oaks and firs peacefully coexisting alongside meticulously tended gardens and flower beds. From the chapel of Agios Nektarios to the Recreation Area, the village of Loutros combines nature with the majestic relics of the Byzantine Empire in great harmony.

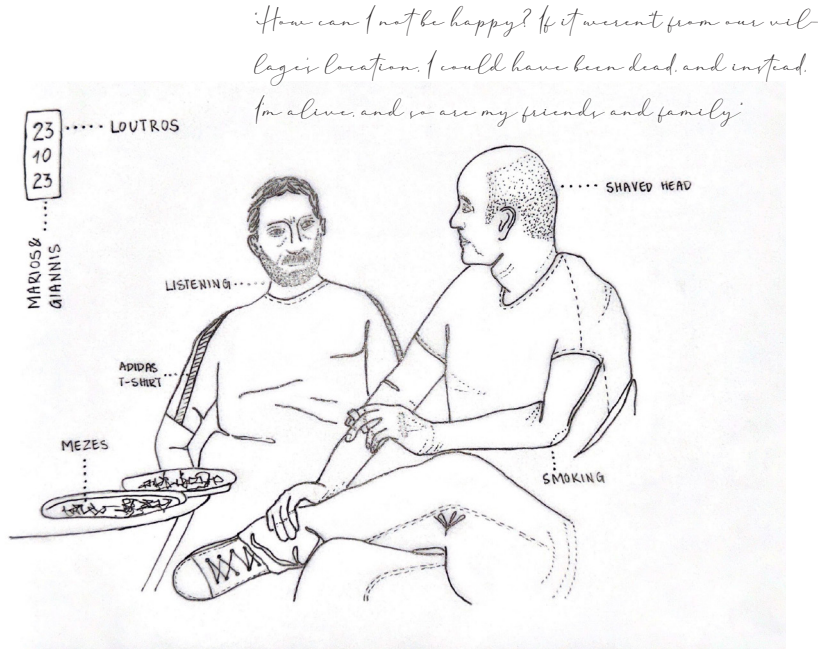
I even got the chance to visit a local farmer’s farm and some fields. “You don’t know where the fire will hit first,” he says. Do you protect your house or your farm? Luckily, I work with my father-in-law, so while I stayed to watch our houses, he cared for the animals, and all of them were safe. Our families had left the village to keep safe.” Most animals or their herd thankfully survived. Some were not so lucky.

Agriculture is the most important economic activity in

the Evros regional unit, followed by livestock farming, which makes farming very important for the area. Arable land covers 42.35% of the total area. The primary cultivation is olive, and the second is sunflower, representing around 50% of the total production in Greece.¹²

The small farm exudes an aura of tranquility and simplicity. In the evening, as the sun sinks below the horizon, the farm settles into a peaceful stillness. The remaining sheep huddle together in the warmth of the barn, their soft bleats mingling with the rustle of hay. The chickens roost in their coop, their contented clucks signaling the end of another day on the farm. For generations, this small farm has provided sustenance and livelihood to its owners. As night falls, the farm remains a beacon of rural life, a sanctuary of serenity amidst the aftermath of devastation.

By then, it was already getting late, and I was tired from a long day. I decided to spend the night at a small hotel in the village.



*Its advantaged geological circumstance, made it easier to keep
the fire of reaching the village and ended up saving it. I knew
it was not the location I was looking for, but decided to spend
some time there and find out.*



OCTOBER 23 2023, LOUTROS



OCTOBER 23 2023, LOUTROS



OCTOBER 23 2023, LOUTROS

Do you not know that the town is on fire? Run!

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Fig.47-48 Before and after pictures of Evros region, found on:
https://www.facebook.com/spbigr/posts/615139737446128?ref=embed_post

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Fig.49 Picture of Kirki before the fire, Google Maps

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Fig.50 Photograph of Kirki after the fire, personal archive



KIRKI



You have arrived at your destination, Kirki

The following morning, it was time for me to head back to Kirki. After a short drive through the black, monotone landscape, I decided to first make a stop. Three kilometers East of the village of Kirki, there is the abandoned lead-zinc processing plant named “St. Philip,” a location that has been the subject of great interest, exploration, and photographs and has a rich history.

Of course, the flames didn’t spare the mines, further destroying the building and blackening its surroundings. As I enter, I notice a sign that reads “Attention! Danger!” surrounded by cut electricity wires. The abandoned mines building stands as a weathered testament to a bygone era of industry and labor when the village of Kirki thrived. Situated at the edge of a desolate landscape, its crumbling facade bears the scars of time and neglect. Once a bustling hub of activity, the building now sits in eerie silence, its windows shattered and its doors hanging askew on rusted hinges. The exterior walls, constructed of weathered bricks and timbers, are streaked with stains from years of exposure to the elements. Vines and ivy creep up the walls, their tendrils snaking through cracks. Like a bad omen, the very walls themselves hold the memories of the toil and hardship endured within.

“St. Philip” was initially operated by a British com-

pany from 1932 to 1939, during which time they constructed a network of tunnels spanning approximately 1600 meters.¹³ The extracted ore was transported in its raw form to Europe from the railway station located in Kirki. Following the outbreak of the Second World War and the subsequent German occupation, the mine came under German control.¹⁴ The Germans significantly expanded the facilities, recognizing the strategic importance of the ore in the region for their military endeavors. Alongside essential infrastructure such as an enrichment plant and an air transport system, the Germans erected various structures to support the operation, including accommodations for the crew, warehouses, and even a lavish villa designated for the German commander.¹⁵

The Germans enlisted villagers to undertake mining operations within the tunnels and to transport the ore to the processing plant using cranes.¹⁶ Despite the completion of the mine’s construction, Germany’s defeat in the war resulted in their abandonment of the site, leaving behind various ore-processing machines. Subsequently, ownership of the mine transferred to the Greek state amidst the tumultuous and uncertain period following the war and the civil conflict, characterized by sporadic and unregulated interventions.¹⁷

The mines underwent a resurgence in operations from 1974 to 1980 and then again from 1990 to 1997, following the acquisition of mining rights by Kypriadis, a private individual who employed local residents from Kirki.¹⁸ However, according to a study conducted by Dr. Kyriakou Arikas of the University of Hamburg and his colleagues in 2007, the failure to implement essential safety measures led to a significant incident in the summer of 1977.¹⁹ Heavy rainfall caused subsidence, resulting in the collapse of the central tunnel system. Fortunately, the accident occurred at night, sparing any human casualties.

In response to this incident, the company shifted to surface mining in deeper sections of the ore-bearing fault.²⁰ However, due to underwhelming financial outcomes, the mine ceased operations in 1980. Despite a brief resurgence in 1990 when the company regained mining rights for the area, surface mining activities on the mountain led to the formation of hazardous pools of surface water, posing significant risks to worker safety.²¹ Consequently, mining operations were definitively halted.

The project, although small in scale, had significant environmental ramifications, leading to the alteration of the area's natural landscape and the emergence of acid runoff. These environmental changes had swift repercussions on the health of local residents. Subsequent investigations revealed a stark reality: a significant portion of the company's workforce had a life expectancy of fewer than 60 years, underscoring the detrimental impact of mining activities on the well-being of the community.²² Today, what one encounters is a dilapidated building with broken windows that time has almost finished.

The air is thick; years of decay, mingled with the acrid smell of metal, earth, and burned wood. Debris litters the ground – broken tools, discarded machinery parts, and the remnants of charred branches. Despite its ruined state, there is a mysterious beauty to the abandoned mines building. The play of light and shadow through the broken windows, creates an atmosphere of enigma, as if the memories of the past still linger within its crumbling walls. As I explore, I can't help but feel a sense of reverence for the lives that were once lived and the stories that were left untold.

I then drove to Kirkas (the local café-restaurant). Luckily, even though it was not the weekend, Kirkas was open due to a Greek public holiday²³, which also made the village more lively and busy.



Fig.52 Archive photo of Dimitris Katsikas with his daughter Loula, outside of the workers' building at the mines, 1965. Alexandros Kazatzis archive

Walking in, a strong smell of lamb meat was in the air (I later found out that roasted lamb with potatoes is their specialty). The rustic interior, with heavy wooden chairs, white, single-use tablecloths, stone floors, fluorescent lights, and Greek folk music in the background, seemed very familiar to me. It was already getting full but I managed to find a table in a corner. Greek dining is a social affair, and meals are meant to be enjoyed at a leisurely pace. Groups were lingering over their food, savoring the flavors and engaging in lively conversation.

Kirki is a quaint village with a population of 75, nestled at the base of the Rhodope Mountains in the Evros region, bordering Turkey to the east and Bulgaria to the north.²⁴ The landscape surrounding Kirki is marked by a picturesque blend of farmlands, hills, and rocks featuring oak and pine trees, making it a destination for nature lovers, hikers, and mountain bikers. Positioned in the valley of the small river Irini, which eventually merges with the Thracian Sea, the village enjoys a scenic location²⁵, I researched while waiting for my order.

When I got my Greek salad and fries, I ate silently while observing my surroundings. I noticed that the recent events of the fire were the topic of conversation for the groups around me. “It’s heartbreaking to see the place where I raised my family reduced to ashes. Our home, our memories, everything gone in an instant. Rebuilding feels like an overwhelming challenge,” I overheard a woman at the next table say. Before I knew it, I was invited to move to the table with the two women to finish my meal.

Theodora, one of the two women at the table, is now 73 and was born and raised in Kirki. “The landscape looks so different now. The trees we used to play under, the fields where we grew our crops—all gone. It’s like a part of our identity has been erased,” says Theodora, while Eleni adds, “If you were here a few months ago, you wouldn’t believe how beautiful our village was.” We were discussing the aftermath of the fire for a while before Theodora’s son joined our table. Teo, a 42-year-

old handyman, drove all the way from Alexandroupoli (the region’s capital) where he lives, to visit his mum. Soon after that, our conversation got a political turn.

The Evros fire possesses a unique characteristic that sets it apart from the wildfires that have ravaged extensive areas in other Greek regions this summer: an underlying sense of paranoia. In contrast to locations like Rhodes or Corfu, Evros is a border area where a profound distrust of foreigners is ingrained in the community.²⁶ The group of three explained the big picture of their everyday lives in the region of Evros, where they are faced with constant threats of attack by Turkey, thousands of immigrants illegally crossing the borders to enter Europe, and a feeling of neglect by the Greek government.

Teo holds the belief that the group of immigrants – victims of the wildfire – were responsible for starting the fire to create a distraction. Theodora and Eleni agree but don’t have much to add, as they can’t explain why.

The victims had reportedly crossed the Evros River, situated on Greece’s border with Turkey, in an attempt to seek asylum within the EU.²⁷ However, those using mountain trails and forests as a means of avoiding detection and potential repatriation were unfairly accused of igniting the fires. The groundless assertion that numerous migrants had engaged in an arson spree gained traction, spreading widely.²⁸

On August 31st, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis seemingly implied, without presenting any supporting evidence, that migrants were to blame as he addressed the parliament: “It is almost certain the causes were man-made. And it is also almost certain that this fire started on routes that are often used by illegal migrants.”²⁹

The head of the nationalist Greek Solution party mentioned “foreign arsonists”, and one of its members of parliament posted a video saying: “We are at war – illegal

The landscape looks so different now. The trees we used to play under, the fields where we grew our crops all gone. It's like a part of our identity has been erased



"If you were here a few months ago, you wouldn't believe how beautiful our village was."

immigrants have entered in a coordinated way and have set more than 10 fires.”³⁰ The animosity was intensified by baseless conspiracy theories disseminated by far-right factions, sensationalized news coverage, and insinuations from top government officials suggesting a connection between fires and established migration paths.³¹

Paula Gori, secretary general of the European Digital Media Observatory, explains the intersection of the climate crisis and migration serves as fertile ground for disinformation due to the intense emotions these topics evoke. She emphasizes that disinformation tends to spread more rapidly than accurate information, with posts generating high interactions gaining even quicker momentum.³² Gori underscores the potent role of emotions in fueling disinformation, especially in the midst of disasters. She notes that during such crises, emotions act as an accelerant, exacerbating the search for culprits and sometimes leading to violent reactions.³³

In the aftermath of the Evros wildfires, the toll was not only measured in lives lost but also in shattered livelihoods. Giorgos Karafillidis, a 45-year-old beekeeper, experienced devastating losses, losing 92 hives that produced his organic honey, as the fires erupted while he was in the midst of getting married. In a heart-wrenching video that went viral, he shared the aftermath, showing the destruction of his livelihood with the poignant cry, “Nothing’s left, only metal sheets. My sweethearts.”³⁴

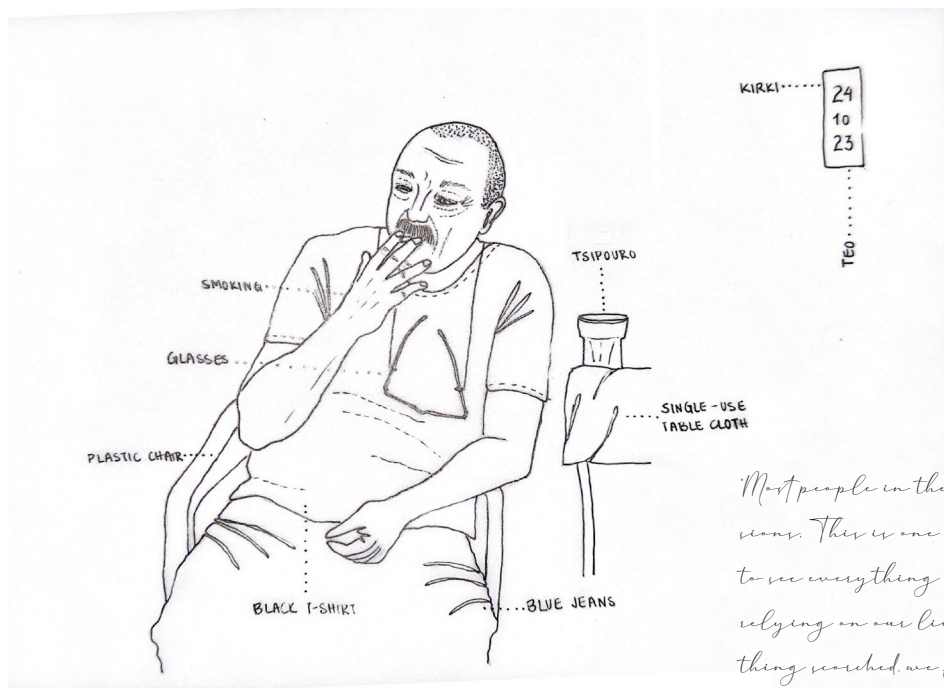
Discovering his burned bees left Giorgos in a state of shock, his heart shattered as he sifted through the twisted metal remnants in the charred clearing where his bees once thrived among the oak trees. Firm in his belief that the fires were deliberately set, Giorgos contends that such arson was orchestrated to advance either foreign or domestic interests. However, he expresses skepticism regarding the notion that ordinary migrants were responsible, stating, “That simple migrants were behind it? I don’t buy it.”³⁵ Giorgos’ perspec-

tive adds nuance to the complex narratives surrounding the wildfires, emphasizing the need for a thorough and accurate understanding of the events that unfolded.

The assertions suggesting that individuals moving along the migration trail were responsible for igniting the fires remain unverified. When questioned about any evidence linking migrants to arson, the Greek fire service responded that the causes of the fires are still under investigation.³⁶ The Evros region has long been a focal point of anti-migrant rhetoric in Europe, marked by heightened policing efforts aimed at intercepting asylum seekers from Turkey. This has included documented instances of unlawful forced returns, contributing to the region’s complex and contentious dynamics.³⁷

Giorgos Hatzigeorgiou, the community president of Avas, finds it straightforward to explain why migrants became the scapegoats for the fires. He points out that people were already on edge due to the constant smuggling of migrants across Avas and other areas each day. However, he dismisses the theory of intentional arson as “utterly ridiculous,” emphasizing the impracticality of such an act.³⁸ Hatzigeorgiou asserts that even if an individual attempted to start a fire, the endeavor would be challenging, let alone ensuring their own safety in the process. His perspective sheds light on the climate of tension and misinformation that can arise in the aftermath of disasters, underscoring the need for careful consideration and accurate information.³⁹

The disproportionate focus on migrants has overshadowed crucial discussions surrounding factors like the readiness of the forestry service and the overarching climate crisis. The Mediterranean region, including Greece, is experiencing a warming trend 20% faster than the global average.⁴⁰ Professor Christos Zerefos, head of the climatology center at the Academy of Athens, highlights the alarming rise in sea-surface temperatures, with July and August ranking as the warmest ever recorded in the eastern Mediterranean.⁴¹



Most people in the village go by with minimum pensions. This is one more reason why it's so heartbreaking to see everything destroyed. We were self-sufficient, relying on our livestock and the land. Now, with everything scorched, we face an uncertain future. The flames took away not just our homes but our way of life.



Fig.56 The charred area where the bodies of 18 migrants were found.
Photograph: Alexandros Avramidis/The Guardian



Fig.57 A watch and a ring, found on the remains of one of the wildfire's victims.
Photograph: Alexandros Avramidis/The Guardian

Despite significant firefighting efforts and assistance from European allies, Evros witnessed 55 forest fires in August alone. The challenges of controlling these fires were exacerbated by prolonged drought, high temperatures, and an exceptionally dry winter, creating conditions conducive to blazes of “extreme severity.” Zerefos emphasizes that such conditions are likely to become more prevalent in the future, underscoring the urgency of addressing the broader issues contributing to the escalating wildfire risks.⁴²

The agency has faced chronic under-resourcing, with no new recruits since 2006, creating a significant strain on its capacity. Zerefos points out the stark reality in Evros, where there are only 18 foresters, some of whom are over 60 years old. This shortage of personnel has undoubtedly hampered the forestry service’s ability to effectively manage and respond to the increasing threat of wildfires. In contrast, there has been notable investment in border guards and advanced technological infrastructure aimed at curbing migration in the very same region.⁴³ The lopsided allocation of resources highlights the need for a more balanced approach that addresses both environmental challenges, such as wildfires, and migration concerns with equal emphasis and resources.⁴⁴

The fire has devastated such an extensive area that the fire fronts no longer seem to share a common origin. Throughout the two-week duration of the fire, an enormous column of smoke emerged from the heart of Dadia Forest National Park, giving rise to a sizable grey and white cloud. This column then extended northward for dozens of kilometers until it dispersed into a mist blanketing the horizon. Over these days, approximately every 10 minutes, four seaplanes and two helicopters engaged in a synchronized dance, crisscrossing trajectories as they discharged thousands of liters of water.⁴⁵ While this spectacle could be described as beautiful, the harsh reality remains that it represents a human, environmental, and social tragedy of immeasurable proportions.

“It felt like the end of the world,” says Eleni. She thinks they need the help of psychologists there. Her six-year-old granddaughter, Katia, can’t sleep and is getting sick with grief. She doesn’t want to stay home because she’s scared of the ‘black land’.

Since the sun had already set, it was time for me to head to the closest hotel to settle in; a small, colorful hotel with a view of the mountains in the nearby village of Sapes, just 20 minutes’ drive away.

The following morning – as well as the mornings after that – I would spend some time at the kafenio for some Greek coffee; a great place for conversations and connections. In Kirki, the community is grappling with the aftermath of the devastation. The waiter, Menelaos, expresses the somber reality, stating, “We have nothing left to lose now.” The once vibrant and lively forest, filled with the harmonious sounds of birdsong and buzzing bees, attracting hikers and mountain bikers, now stands silent and blackened. The stark transformation of the landscape reflects the profound impact of the wildfires, leaving the community to confront the harsh reality of their losses and the long road to recovery ahead.

I was then invited to visit the recently renovated community center of the village. It is housed in the building that used to be the primary school but was no longer needed due to the absence of young children in Kirki. The building now has a folklore exhibition hall with heirlooms donated from the homes of the locals, artifacts passed down through generations, each imbued with its own story and significance. Intricately carved wooden chests, ornate jewelry adorned with symbols of protection and prosperity, embroidered textiles featuring motifs inspired by ancient mythology, and school equipment are some of the artifacts. These heirlooms serve as tangible links to the past, preserving the customs, beliefs, and legends that have shaped Greek identity for centuries. Run by a handful of locals on a volunteering basis, the community center can only



open on occasion; for example, during times of need this past summer, it served as a community kitchen and a space where goods were collected and distributed to the residents.

In the wake of this devastating disaster, the resilient spirit of the community of Kirki shines brightly as neighbors come together to offer support, assistance, and solidarity. Amidst the rubble and chaos, acts of kindness abound, showcasing the inherent strength and compassion of humanity. Families open their doors to those displaced by the disaster, providing shelter and comfort. People work side by side, distributing supplies, and offering a helping hand wherever it is needed. Sharing resources becomes second nature, as neighbors pool their food, water, and power tools to help with restoration. Bonds forged through adversity strengthen, creating a sense of togetherness that will endure long after the physical scars of the disaster have healed.

“Whatever I have, you can have too,” says Menelaos, about bringing bags loaded with food to the rest of the residents during the fire. “Most people in the village go by with minimum pensions.” (The monthly state pension in Greece is 411 euros as of January 2023.)⁴⁶ “This is one more reason why it’s so heartbreaking to see everything destroyed. We were self-sufficient, relying on our livestock and the land. Now, with everything scorched, we face an uncertain future. The flames took away not just our homes but our way of life.”

“The flames united us in a way we never expected. Neighbors helping neighbors, sharing whatever little we have left. The bond forged in the fire’s heat is the one good thing coming from this,” states Eleni Nikolaidou in her appreciation post on the village’s Facebook group. “The resilience of our community is being tested. We’ve lost so much, but we’re determined to rebuild. It’s going to take time, but we’re not giving up on our village”, posts Panagiotis Tsolakis on the same group.

“The village was full of reporters and cameras the first couple of weeks after the fire. Our village was the most affected by the fire, as you will see; all of our houses are destroyed, that’s why they wanted to document it. But we haven’t seen anyone visiting in over a month now”, says Menelaos. Then, he suggests I continue my exploration with the cemetery of the village, as it was completely burned, leaving behind a unique landscape that is currently being restored. “There are workers there now, so they can help you with your research”.

Walking through the village to get there, the scene is one of stark devastation and haunting beauty. Charred remnants of houses stand like silent sentinels against the backdrop of ash-covered mountains. The once vibrant facades of homes and well-kept gardens now lie in ruins, blackened timbers and crumbling bricks. Roofs now lie collapsed and twisted, charred remnants scattered across the ground like shards of broken pottery. Broken windows and the charred outlines of doorways stand as silent reminders of rooms that once were. Through the empty window frames, the interior of the house is visible, though it is shrouded in darkness and shadow. What was once a cozy home filled with laughter and life now lies in ruins, the furniture reduced to ash and rubble.

Even newly built houses, cars, and farming equipment could not escape the flames. Tree branches reach out against the sky, stripped of their foliage and life. The atmosphere is heavy with the scent of smoke, mingling with the earthy aroma of charred wood and vegetation. Despite the devastation, the scene has a haunting beauty. Nature begins to reclaim the scorched earth, with tendrils of green pushing through the charred debris in a silent testament to life’s resilience. Nearby, a well-tended garden bursts with an abundance of vegetables and herbs, lovingly cultivated by the owners. Two stray cats approach me, asking for pets, as a sign of hope and a symbol of nature’s fragility.

As I step through the wrought-iron gates of the cemetery, I understand why Menelaos urged me to visit. Walking through the burned cemetery was a poignant experience, where tombstones, once standing with stoic permanence, now bore the visible scars of the wildfire. The hallowed ground, disrupted by the indiscriminate flames, added another layer of sorrow to the already grieving village. The rows of gravestones stand like silent sentinels, each one a marker for a life lived and a story told. Here, I feel a connection that transcends the boundaries of life and death.

The hushed whispers of rustling leaves and the distant songs of birds overhead create a symphony of nature, as if paying homage to the souls at rest. The air is heavy with a sense of respect, and my steps become measured, almost instinctively guided by an unseen force. This is not merely a collection of graves; it is a spiritual haven, a place where the veil between the past and the present feels thin.

Total black trees surrounding marble, once white, tombstones. Piles of already cut, burned trees lying on the ground.



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Fig.64 Picture of Kirki before the fire, Google Maps



Fig.65 Photograph of Kirki after the fire, personal archive

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Fig.66 Picture of Kirki before the fire, Google Maps

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Fig.67 Photograph of Kirki after the fire, personal archive





An intersection of life and death

“Memento mori” is a Latin phrase dating back to ancient times, translating to “remember that you are mortal.”⁴⁷ In Roman culture, it wasn’t a reflection of a fatalistic attitude towards death but rather served as a reminder to cherish and appreciate life.

Sitting in my car, I observe the cemetery from a distance. A couple of men are cutting down the remains of the trees, and another one is carefully but forcefully trying to clean the marble. Then Anna arrives for her daily visit. “My sister lies here, as well as my parents and some of my cousins.” She smirks and adds, “I’m the only one left. If I don’t bring them flowers, light their candles, and clean up their graves, no one will.”

At first, I thought that’s why people here are so connected to the cemetery: flowers and candles. I believed it was just about maintenance. Being in an older generation, as the younger ones have left the village, leaves you responsible for upkeep.

It was only after I, myself, spent time there that I understood the real reason. Everyone in this village has experienced loss in their life. And now again, they are experiencing a different kind of loss. In addition to the shared trauma of a disaster, people have faced the loss of homes and community infrastructure. These challenges make the fundamental aspects of daily life diffi-

cult. Moreover, there is a loss of identity, meaning, and purpose, all of which significantly influence overall health and well-being.⁴⁸

In this post-disaster situation, the residents of Kirki are looking for a deeper meaning, something bigger than them. Yet, the only spiritual place in the village, the only place where the community has a public space, religious or not, is the cemetery.

Spirituality is defined as “an aspect of humanity that refers to the way individuals seek and express meaning and purpose, the way they experience their connectedness to the moment, to self, to others, to nature, and to the significant or sacred”.⁴⁹ Spirituality can manifest in various forms and is not limited to religious expressions. For some, spirituality is expressed through religious practices like prayers and meditation, while others may convey it through non-religious actions such as displaying love, being present, participating in the community, and actively listening.⁵⁰

People often turn to spirituality in times of suffering, as it aids them in discovering meaning, persevering through challenges and hardships, and fostering healing and recuperation during periods of loss and grief, supporting the subsequent recovery procedures following a disaster.⁵¹ Disasters often remind people of their mortality, threatening the predictability and safety of the natural world⁵², so it’s only expected that Kirki’s residents find comfort in visiting the cemetery.

“Cemeteries are for the living. They’re there for us, they’re there to comfort us, they’re there to educate us, they’re there to provide peaceful meditative places to contemplate our own mortality and our own life,” author Tui Snider said.⁵³ Above all else, cemeteries serve as repositories of memory, deeply intertwined with the spatial, temporal, and bodily experiences cultivated by their surroundings. They transcend mere resting places for the deceased; rather, they become sites of active engagement, where the passage of time and the con-

cept of death are contemplated and processed. Here, the departed assume a social role, where rituals replace biological events, marking their enduring presence within the collective consciousness.⁵⁴

In numerous cultures, cemeteries hold sacred significance, demanding particular conduct from those who traverse their grounds. The hushed atmosphere prompts a sense of readiness and a shift in demeanor upon entering, leading the renowned French philosopher Michel Foucault to regard them as heterotopic spaces.⁵⁵

To clarify, “heterotopia” stems from the Greek words “hetero” (meaning different or other) and “topos” (meaning place). Initially employed in medicine and biology from the 1920s, it denoted the development of organic tissues in atypical locations without impeding the functions of the organs where they originate.⁵⁶ Thus, extrapolating from this notion, cemeteries may be perceived as sites that transcend conventional categorizations, acting as anomalies that disrupt our typical encounters and evoke a unique ambiance, particularly within urban settings.⁵⁷

While some may find cemeteries morbid, I don’t share that sentiment. For me, cemeteries bring a sense of peace, contemplation, and even relaxation.⁵⁸



As I exit the cemetery, I carry with me a sense of reverence and a renewed appreciation for the intricate dance between life and death.



OCTOBER 25 2023



OCTOBER 26 2023



150 graves

[illegible]

The number of people in the group is small, but the
 group is large enough to be about the same size as the
 group of people in the group. The group is large enough
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75 residents

Kirki's Cemetery

Walking through the burned cemetery was a deeply emotional and sobering experience. The wildfire had left its mark on this sacred space, with tombstones bearing the visible damage of the intense flames. The air carried the distinct scent of burnt wood, adding to the heavy atmosphere of grief. The once carefully tended graves, adorned with flowers and personal items, now appeared stark and bare. The heat had weathered the headstones, erasing some of the details that once spoke of the lives remembered. The skeletal remains of nearby trees cast shadows over the scorched ground, creating a scene that underscored the harsh reality of the wildfire's impact on this final resting place. The cemetery stood as a powerful testament to the indiscriminate nature of such disasters, affecting even the most sacred and personal spaces.

There is no school in Kirki, no active church, and a community center that only operates on occasion. So, the residents are left with the cemetery as the sole spiritual place. A compact, 30x30 meters burial ground, with no more than 150 marble graves (double the number of the living residents). But there's still something missing – a chapel. "There's no church in the village and no chapel for the cemetery. We have to drive to the nearest chapel to carry out a funeral service" says Anna, "and when you are in the cemetery, there is not even a place to sit, have a conversation".

The Greek Orthodox Church opposes cremation, claiming that the body is a creation of God and should not be burned. However, under the law, Orthodox Greeks can opt for cremation if they have explicitly stated this preference in writing before their demise or if their immediate relatives express the wish for it.⁵⁹ In a country where more than 95% of the population is Orthodox, families of individuals who prefer cremation incur substantial expenses, often amounting to thousands of euros, to transport their loved ones to neighboring Bulgaria for cremation services.⁶⁰ As a result, traditional burials are the norm for the deceased. A typical Greek Orthodox funeral service involves a wake, followed by a funeral mass held in a church or a chapel.⁶¹ Family members play an active role during the service, reciting readings, and some may also serve as pallbearers. A commemoration service usually takes place one week after the person has died, and then they'll recur after 40 days and then again at the 1-year mark.

Community support is one of the important post-disaster steps that have to be taken, based on the European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS).⁶² To involve the local communities in the restoration process, to seek input and collaboration is very much necessary, but it doesn't seem like it was done properly in the village of Kirki. As the director of the Community Centre in Kirki mentions in a radio interview, "The government is nowhere to be found after the fire".⁶³

The once-white marble has turned black from the fire and is now in the process of turning white again. As I approach Antonis, one of the people responsible for restoring the cemetery, I watch him throwing out the remains of a burned bouquet of flowers. "It takes almost a whole day to clean a single gravestone. I power wash it with chemicals and finish with fine sandpaper; it makes the marble look brand new. It's hard work but we have to do it; we can't let people grieve here like this", he says. "It's the fourth day that I'm here. I just finished with the graves of my family and now I am moving on to the one of the late mayor's Kouvalakis", Antonis adds.



Fig.74-79 Pictures of the process of cleaning the cemetery, from Facebook group. Photographs: Ilias Dasteridis

Gravestones often serve as deeply personal reflections of the individual commemorated, blending cultural symbolism with intimate touches that speak to their unique identity and legacy. Carved with precision and care, these gravestones may feature religious iconography such as crosses or depictions of saints, symbolizing the individual's faith and devotion. Yet, what truly makes a Greek Orthodox gravestone personal is the inclusion of elements that reflect the life and personality of the deceased. Inscriptions may bear meaningful quotes, verses from scripture, or poignant messages that capture their essence. Pictures, flowers, small symbolic objects, like a wedding ring, and a candle burning also adorn the gravestone, offering glimpses into the passions and experiences that defined their life. Gravestones become more than mere markers of remembrance; they become sacred testaments to the individual's journey, cherished by loved ones and generations to come.

"Our village was a hidden gem, surrounded by nature. Now, it's like a ghost town. The damage is not just physical; the emotional toll is immense. We're grappling with a new reality," says Andreas, another man on the crew. He has lived in a neighboring village for the past few years but was born in Kirki. Spending time in the cemetery is a good way to reconnect with the people of the community, as everyone comes by, he mentions. Usually, Andreas' job has been to build parks since 2008. However, he's now cutting down trees due to the circumstances, but he doesn't mind the job. "You can see the scars of the fire across the landscape, but we're determined to bring life back. Planting new seeds, rebuilding homes—whatever we need to do to help our village rise from the ashes."

The present, too, asserts itself in the silence of the cemetery. Freshly laid flowers, mementos, and tokens of remembrance speak of a living connection to those who have passed. It is a place where grief and love intertwine, where the living reach across the veil to touch the memories of the departed. In this intersection of the temporal and the eternal, the present moment is

both a continuation of the past and a precursor to the future. Names etched in stone tell tales of love, loss, triumphs, and tribulations. The cemetery, in its stillness, becomes a symbol of collective memory, a place where the past lingers, refusing to be forgotten.

The architecture of the tombstones, ranging from simple markers to ornate monuments, reflects the diversity of human experience. Some graves are adorned with flowers and mementos, while others bear the weight of time, their inscriptions weathered but enduring. In this mosaic of mortality, I find solace and a profound sense of introspection. I find myself drawn to the quiet corners, where the burned trees stretch their branches overhead, casting dappled shadows on the ground. Beneath these boughs, the black graves seem to merge with the burned surroundings, creating a harmonious blend of life and death.

As I visited Kirki while the cemetery was only starting to be cleaned, I reached out to the Facebook group of the village to request more recent pictures to see the state of it. I now see the current state of the cemetery after the restoration is done, and the landscape is completely different. The white marble, restored to its original luster, is standing out vibrant in contrast to the charred land. The intricacies of the carvings, once obscured by ash, now emerge with newfound clarity, wiped clean, almost like this moment in time – the wildfire – had never happened. Most of the trees are now cut down, leaving behind only a small reminder of what it used to be. The remaining skeleton trees that are left uncut now look even taller in the background.

Opportunities emerge in the juxtaposition of elements—between the scorched earth and the potential for rebirth, between the fragments of structures and the prospect of new beginnings. Designing within such a landscape requires a delicate balance between preservation and transformation, acknowledging the scars of the past while embracing the possibilities of renewal.

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Fig.80-85 Pictures of the process of cleaning the cemetery, from Facebook group. Photographs: Christos Karabatzakis

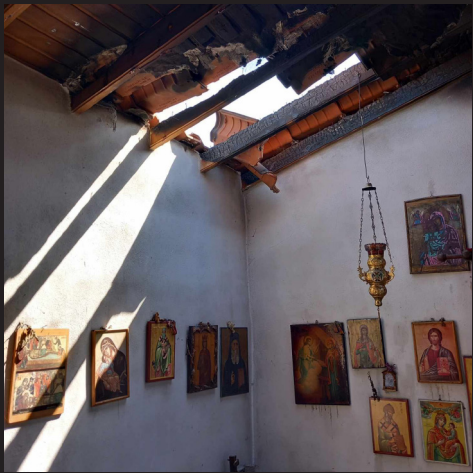
One architectural consideration is the integration of sustainable, re-used, and fire-resistant materials. Designing a chapel that can blend seamlessly with the natural surroundings while minimizing the risk of future wildfires can redefine the cemetery's future while providing the community with a space for collective healing. The use of resilient materials, coupled with innovative landscaping practices, can contribute to a harmonious coexistence between architecture and the ever-changing environment.

The cemetery's layout presents a chance for compassionate design. The pathways winding through the scorched landscape can be reimagined to mirror the cyclical essence of life and death, meandering through areas of regrowth and spaces dedicated to remembrance. Architectural elements, like memorial walls or sculptures made from fire-resistant materials, can serve as poignant markers of memory, symbolizing the lasting impact of cherished moments amidst life's fleeting nature.

Strategically placed small interventions, representing renewal and regeneration, transform into points of memory, offering a sense of tranquility and hope, underlining life's cyclical aspect and the potential for rejuvenation after the devastation. Furthermore, integrating sustainable and ecologically responsible design principles can contribute to the healing process. Incorporating native plantings, fire-resistant greenery, and open spaces not only enhances Kirki's visual appeal but also plays a role in restoring the ecosystem.

The architectural canvas of a post-fire cemetery offers an opportunity for renewal, resilience, and contemplation. My vision, rooted in an understanding of the intersection of life and death, past and future, can shape a space that pays homage to lost memories while embracing the inherent vitality of the natural world. Through thoughtful design, the cemetery becomes a testament to the enduring spirit of life, capable of rising from the ashes and flourishing once more.

A compact, 30x30 meter burial ground, with no more than 150 marble graves (double than the living residents).



From top to bottom:
Fig.86- 87 The closest chapel after the fire,
from Facebook group. Photographs: Alexandra Nikolaidou
Fig.88- 90 The cemetery after restoration,
from Facebook group. Photographs: Christos Karabatzakis









Conclusion

In closing, the exploration of Evros, especially the village of Kirki, reveals a layered tale of human and environmental strength in the aftermath of a devastating wildfire. Coined by geologists, the Anthropocene signifies an era where human actions outweigh geological forces, with the Pyrocene emerging as a distinct chapter due to our profound impact on Earth through fire manipulation.

The destruction in Kirki, forever altered by the recent wildfire, mirrors the broader challenges humanity grapples with in the Anthropocene. This essay navigates through the charred landscapes, sharing the stories of individuals, whose lives were entwined with the destructive path of the fire. These personal accounts illuminate the intricate connections between human lives, environmental fragility, and the wider socio-political backdrop.

As the narrative unfolds, the focus on blaming migrants for the fires reveals a complex interplay of misinformation, societal tensions, and the pressing need for a balanced approach. The essay highlights the disproportionate allocation of resources, emphasizing border protection at the expense of environmental preparedness. The scapegoating of migrants, lacking evidence, underscores the peril of relying on simplistic narratives after disasters.

In essence, the journey through Evros becomes a testament to the intricate challenges of the Anthropocene and the Pyrocene. It urges a comprehensive understanding that embraces environmental care, social justice, and acknowledgment of the profound interdependence between humanity and the natural world.

In the intersection of life and death lies a profound revelation: the cemetery in Kirki, once scarred by the ravages of wildfire, emerges as a testament to resilience, renewal, and the enduring spirit of life. Beyond its role as a final resting place, the cemetery becomes a symbolic focal point for the community, a space where the temporal and the eternal intersect. The residents of Kirki, grappling with the aftermath of a disaster and the loss of homes and identity, find solace and meaning in this sacred ground.

The exploration of Kirki's cemetery provides a poignant perspective on the spiritual and emotional toll of the wildfire. The burned tombstones become symbolic markers of both personal and communal loss, while the restoration efforts symbolize the resilience of the human spirit. The contrast between the scorched landscape and the sacredness of the cemetery underscores the profound impact of the fire on the community's cultural and spiritual fabric.

The narrative unfolds, revealing the pivotal role of cemeteries in providing a sense of connection, spirituality, and continuity. In the absence of a school, an active church, or a dedicated chapel, the cemetery stands as the sole spiritual refuge for the villagers. The challenges faced by the community post-disaster underscore the importance of meaningful spaces for collective healing and reflection.

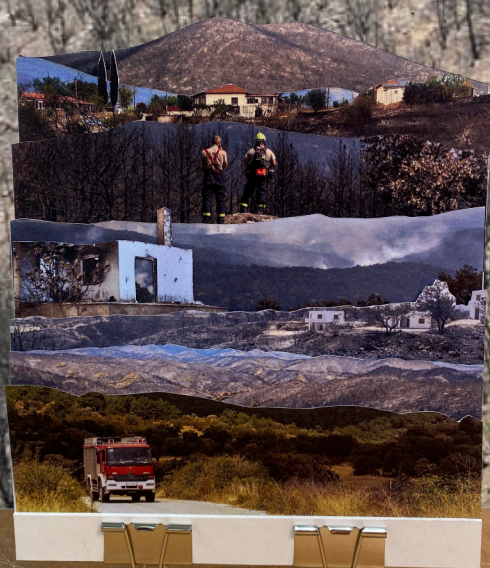
The cemetery, initially marred by the harsh imprint of the wildfire, undergoes a transformative journey. Through meticulous restoration efforts, the white marble, once stained by soot, regains its original vibrancy.

The architectural considerations presented offer a vision for a renewed cemetery—a space where sustainable, fire-resistant materials coalesce with innovative design, blending seamlessly with the natural surroundings, symbolizing the cyclical nature of life and death.

As memories intertwine with the present, the cemetery becomes a repository of collective memory. The architecture of tombstones reflects the diversity of human experience, from adorned graves to weathered markers. The juxtaposition of scorched earth and potential rebirth mirrors the delicate balance required in designing for renewal. Opportunities emerge in the wake of destruction, emphasizing the impermanence of life and the potential for rejuvenation.

Through this narrative, the importance of spirituality and meaningful spaces in the face of adversity becomes evident. The residents of Kirki, bound by loss and seeking deeper meaning, find a sanctuary in the cemetery. It transcends its role as a burial ground, evolving into a place of reflection, hope, and resilience. In the architectural canvas of the post-fire cemetery, a vision for renewal takes shape—a testament to the enduring spirit of life that rises from the ashes, ready to thrive once again.







Footnotes

- ¹ Donna Haraway, “Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene: Staying with the Trouble,” presentation for “Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet,” Santa Cruz, CA, May 9, 2014, <http://anthropocene.au.dk/arts-of-living-on-a-damaged-planet/>, argues that “Anthropocene” gestures to sky gods; instead, she suggests we honor the “tentacular ones”— and multispecies entanglements— by calling our era the Chthulucene. Indeed, Anthropocene calls up varied meanings, as the 2014 debate over plans for a “good” Anthropocene illustrated. See, for example, Keith Kloor, who embraces the Anthropocene through a “green modernism” in “Facing up to the Anthropocene,” <http://blogs.discovermagazine.com/collideascape/2014/06/20/facinganthropocene/#.U6h8XbbgvpA>. Found on page 6
- ² Anna Tsing, “The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins,” Princeton University Press, 2021, p.19. Found on page 6
- ³ Stephen J. Pyne, “The Pyrocene: How we Created an Age of Fire, and what Happens Next,” University of California Press, 2021, p.II. Found on page 6
- ⁴ Ibid. Found on page 6
- ⁵ Osaka, Shannon, Michael E. Miller, and Beatriz Rios. “The Fire Equivalent of an Ice Age: Humanity Enters a New Era of Fire.” The Washington Post, June 10, 2023. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2023/06/10/canadian-wildfire-smoke-pyrocene/>. Found on page 6
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- ¹⁰ Ibid. Found on page 7
- ¹¹ Faiola, Anthony, and Elinda Labropoulou. “How Wildfires Are Threatening the Mediterranean Way of Life.” The Washington Post, September 2, 2023. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/09/02/greece-fires-2023-rhodes/>. Found on page 7
- ¹² Kyriazopoulos, A.P., A. López-Francos, C. Porqueddu, and P. Sklavou. “Overview on Grassland and Farming Systems in Evros Regional Unit.” Ecosystem Services and Socio-Economic Benefits of Mediterranean Grasslands, 2016. <https://om.ciheam.org/om/pdf/a114/00007478.pdf>. Found on page 21
- ¹³ Poulimeni, Stavroula. “Kirki: A story of an abandoned mine” [“Κίρκη: Η Ιστορία Ενός Εγκαταλελειμμένου Μεταλλείου.”] AlterThess, September 3, 2013. <https://alterthess.gr/kirki-i-istoria-enos-egkataleimmenoy-metalleioy-foto-kai-vinteo/>. Found on page 30
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- ²³ “Ohi Day.” Wikipedia, December 28, 2023. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ohi_Day. Ohi Day (Greek: Επέτειος του Όχι, lit. ‘Anniversary of the No’) is celebrated on 28 October each year. Ohi Day commemorates the rejection by the Greek dictator Ioannis Metaxas of the ultimatum made by Italian dictator Benito Mussolini on 28 October 1940 and the subsequent Hellenic counterattack against the invading Italian forces at the mountains of Pindus during the Greco-Italian War and Greek resistance during the Axis occupation. The events of 1940 are commemorated yearly with military and student parades; on every anniversary, most public buildings and residences are decorated with national flags. Schools and all places of work are closed. Found on page 31
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Guidance

Hans Venhuizen - Department Head
Anne Hoogewoning - Research tutor
Gerjan Streng - Research tutor
Nasim Razavian - Design tutor
Esther de Vries - Graphic tutor
Lotte van den Berg - Coordinator

Special thank you to all of my classmates
who made these months special:

Adar Cohen
Athina Botonaki
Andela Brnas
Alicia Rottke Fitzpatrick
Daan Maarse
Nasma Al-Shutfa
Nika Dundua
Luka Smišek
Mirco Azzopardi
Ronald Bal
Kyunga Kim

Tracing life in the fire-altered
landscape of Greece:
A travelogue to the village of Kirki

Ina Patsali

2024

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