Streets Not Named: Discursive Dead Ends and the Politics of Orientation in Intercommunal Spatial Relations in Northern Greece

Olga Demetriou
Oxford University

Parading the Nation

Komotini, a town in northern Greece, hosts two parades each year in addition to the one on March 25 celebrating national independence. The parade on October 28 commemorates the beginning of the 1940 Greco–German war and Greek resistance during the occupation. This is a national holiday, when parades are held in all Greek cities. The other, on May 14, although nationally important, is only a holiday locally. It celebrates the Greek army’s entry into Komotini on May 14, 1920, at the end of the Allied administrative mandate (after World War I). This entry signaled the “attachment of western Thrace onto the national body” (ensomátosi tis dhitikis Thráxis ston ethnikó kormó) as part of a process called the “national [territorial] completion” (ethnikí oloklírosi). In this sense, the yearly staging of the parade re-marks, by symbolically reenacting, the definitive moment when Komotini became “Greek” and thereby ceased to be “Turkish.”

Komotini’s “Greekness” is in fact manifested on a daily basis by how people speak about the town, how local officials mark claims to Greekness on Komotinian streets, and how its Turkish-speaking minority (about one half of the town’s population of approximately 50 thousand) is pushed out of official constructions of urban place such as street naming and cartography. This article examines these processes and the ways in which Komotini’s Greekness is constantly put into question through the mere presence of the minority population, their interactions with Greeks, and their own discourses about the town. Through analyzing concepts and uses of space, I examine the penetration of nationalism into daily life and its framing of experience.
Historical Aspects of Space Making

Before becoming Greek, Komotini was part of the Ottoman Empire and had a Turkish name, Gümülçine. This is the name by which Turkish-speaking inhabitants still refer to the town and the basis on which they classify themselves as Gümülçinelis (people of Gümülçine). As one of the last Ottoman territories to be annexed by foreign powers after the empire’s slow demise, western Thrace had been a location where Muslims fleeing Balkan territories settled in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Since the independence of Bulgaria in 1878, Muslims moved southward from northern Thrace and settled in the Ottoman parts of Macedonia and Thrace. In 1998, many of my informants traced their families’ origins to ancestors who had made this move. They also spoke of distant family members who were descended from the siblings of those ancestors—people who had opted to move into cities further east, such as Istanbul and Bursa, which became part of the Turkish Republic following the collapse of the empire.

It was the Turkish War of National Liberation that sealed the fate of the empire with the abolition of the sultanate, the adoption of a republican constitution, and the demarcation of Turkey’s national borders in the 1920 National Pact (Misak-ı Milli). In that year, Greece and Turkey signed the Treaty of Sèvres, which envisioned a referendum in 1925 allowing the Greek takeover of eastern Thrace and Smyrna, thus almost realizing the Great Idea (Megáli Idhéa) of Greek expansionism. What followed instead was the 1922 Asia Minor Disaster (Mikrasiatikí Katastrofí) that annulled the Treaty of Sèvres and caused an influx of destitute refugees to pour into Greek territory at a time when the state was ill equipped to accommodate them. This resulted in the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, which guaranteed the borders between the two countries and enforced the exchange of the Muslim populations of Greece for the Orthodox Christian populations of Turkey. The only peoples exempted from this dual effort of national homogenization were the Orthodox inhabitants of Istanbul, Imbros, and Tenedos and the Muslim inhabitants of western Thrace. Since then, the border between Greece and Turkey has not altered, and Komotini remains a place in a “state of exception,” wherein the same circumstances that legalized the undermining of the state rhetoric of national purity also gave it force. Thus, in celebrating the triumphant entry of the Greek army into Komotini in 1920, the May 14 parade places Komotini’s point of origin within a celebratory national imaginary that glosses over national defeats. From 1920 onward, Greek local administrators undertook to rename places (towns, streets, and villages) as part of a wider effort to nationalize these newly incorporated territories; this effort included strategies of managing the population, such as settling Greek refugees in demographically heterogeneous (“minority”) areas.

These strategies are prime examples of what Michel Foucault calls “biopolitics,” defining it as a “technology of power . . . addressed to a multiplicity of men, not to the extent that they are nothing more than their individual bodies, but to the extent that they form, on the contrary, a global mass that is affected by overall
processes characteristic of birth, death, production, illness, and so on” (2003:242–243). The effect of this power on the environment, which is what is exemplified by the demographic and space-naming policies I describe here, is “biopolitics’ last domain” (Foucault 2003:244).

In their review of studies of the built environment, Denise Lawrence and Setha Low argue that “the most promising direction for anthropologists lies in the area of social production theories” (1990:491). Since then, anthropological explorations of space have provided valuable insights into how space is constructed, lived, and experienced (Appadurai 1996:48–65; Bender 1998; Low 1996; Tilley 1994). More recently, emphasis has shifted from conceptualizing space as a fixed category to seeing it as “an instrument and dimension of people’s sociality” (Corsín Jiménez 2003:140). In this article, I analyze what my informants see and remember in their daily walks around the town, how they use public spaces on special occasions, how they experience changing senses of place, and how they talk about their town, its neighborhoods, and its streets. I thus examine the emergence of multiple constructions of place and the complex relations between them to elucidate the process through which space becomes politicized.

**Celebrating and Pluralizing Greekness**

The May parade is an enactment of this celebratory gloss of national history. The more important of Komotini’s two yearly parades, it marks the culmination of a weeklong celebration of local Greek folklore. During this week, the town’s various Greek cultural clubs perform celebrations of their own particular (Greek) “cultures”: Sarakatsan, eastern Thracian, Cappadocian, northern Thracian, and Pontic. According to the authorities, the selection of these groups is meant to highlight Komotini’s “multiculturalism” (*polipolitismikótita*).6

At the same time, this selection of cultures also exposes the silence regarding the town’s multiethnic population. The Sarakatsáni, the first Greek group to be anthropologically studied (Campbell 1964), used to be transhumant shepherds living in the mountains of northern Greece. The government later settled them in various villages; in Thrace they are considered the region’s “original” inhabitants. Eastern Thrace, now part of Turkey, and northern Thrace, now part of Bulgaria, are the “homelands” of many Greek Komotinians because Greeks from the latter moved into western Thrace with a voluntary population exchange in 1919 and from the former with the compulsory exchange imposed by the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 referred to above. It should be noted that eastern Thracian clubs in Komotini also include members from the Greek minority of Istanbul who immigrated to Greece following ethnic violence in the 1950s. These clubs institutionalize, therefore, a particular kind of Greekness that emphasizes geographical origins and a history of “expulsions” (*dhyogmí*) over historically differentiated experiences of citizenship as refugees in Greece and as a Greek minority in Turkey. Cappadocia, in what is now central Turkey, is the homeland of those Greek Komotinians whose ancestors
came to western Thrace in 1923 with the population exchange but who distinguish themselves from eastern Thracians through their separate cultural clubs and their identification as Karamanlídhes (Turkish-speaking Orthodox Christians who wrote in the Greek alphabet). It should again be noted that their enforced relocation testifies to the disjunction between the 1923 official understandings of Greekness as an identity that combined language and religion and the practical divergences from this idea on the ground. The last of the officially recognized cultural groups, the Pontiacs, are mostly recent arrivals, having immigrated to the area in the 1990s from the former Soviet republics, following the implementation of “repatriation” policies by the Greek government.

Local Greek politicians often refer to this cultural diversity as Komotini’s plútos (wealth), however its representation within the national liberation festivities downplays the divisions among what are considered homoethnic communities (omoethnís kinótites). The adjective omoethnís is in fact primarily used to describe Pontiacs, in an attempt to emphasize their Greekness and differentiate them from immigrants in general (Voutira 2003). It thus encompasses a connotation of otherness while professing sameness. It is this quality that I want to emphasize in extending the term to the other local groups of Greeks who, in a reversal of the signification structure, are important in these celebrations for their cultural difference, but a difference which is actually a variation of ethnic sameness. It is this very presentation of sameness that emphasizes the major division that pertains in the town: the division between its Greek population and the local Turkish speakers, who are members of what Greece considers a “Muslim,” and what Turkey considers a “Turkish,” minority of Greece (numbering around 120 thousand in the whole of Greece and divided into Turks, Gypsies, and Pomaks).7

The contest over the definition of the minority reflects the turbulent relations over the last century between Greece and its neighbors. The 1923 Lausanne Treaty described the minority population of Greece as Muslim. In subsequent years, the Greek government used different terms to refer to this population and was by no means consistent. In 1954, for example, the commander general of Thrace issued a directive instructing that the minority population be referred to as Turkish, rather than Muslim, in all official documents (Kanakidou 1994:58–59). In 1983, after the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus declared its independence, the Greek authorities, following the suggestion of a local official, made it illegal to use the word Turkish in reference to the minority in Greece. Minority organizations that carried the word Turkish or its derivatives in their title ceased to be recognized. In 1999, after years of bitter dispute, Minister of Foreign Affairs George Papandreou, as part of his initiative of rapprochement with Turkey, stated that members of the minority should be allowed to identify themselves individually as Turks if they so wished. This shift in policy survived the change of governments in both Greece and Turkey, and in 2004, the Turkish premier carried out an official visit to Komotini where he addressed the minority as Turks and as Greek citizens and urged them to work for Greece’s prosperity because this would translate into the
minority’s prosperity as well. Friends present at the event reported that this was such a shocking shift in the rhetoric that local newspaper publishers were at a loss to interpret it and, subsequently, none of the minority weeklies went to press that week. Despite these changes, however, the celebrations of multiculturalism culminating in the May parade have changed little since 1998. The parade itself still underlines the unity of a Greek nation that is willing to accept cultural difference as long as such difference is predicated on common ethnic origins.

Parade Routes

The May parade of 1999 started at around 10 a.m. and was extremely well attended. A government minister had flown in from Athens, and as the crowd thickened, he took his position on the officials’ platform outside the District Office on Dhimokratías (Democracy) Street. The parading schoolchildren and the soldiers gathered further up the road. They marched in front of the platform and down the street, then followed the curve into Leofóros Irón (Heroes Avenue), circled the Spathí monument to the other side of the park, and went down the road leading to the Town Hall.

Considering the short distance of this route (about 300 meters), it seems that the point of the parade was more to walk past the officials than to proceed around the town. During the longer Easter processions, by contrast, icons and other holy relics are paraded through most of the Greek neighborhoods. The shorter itinerary of the May parade marked the town’s physical landmarks as much as it did the historical ones. The street on which it began is named after the ideal—democracy—which has guided Greek politics in the last century at least, including the 1967 Colonels’ Coup (Athenian 1972:115–117), and remained, even after the colonels’ downfall in 1974, as the buzzword of state rhetoric. The fact that the District Office (Nomarchía) has been on Democracy Street since 1972 seems to be a conscious effort to link the concept of the state to the ideal of democracy.

Apart from the officials’ platform, the other site that the parade paid tribute to was the Spathí. This monument, formally known as Mnímio Irón (Heroes Memorial), is Komotini’s major landmark. A project of the colonels, it consists of a dark, five-meter-high sword sculpted in high relief and set against a background of white marble. The Spathí does not commemorate all of Komotini’s possible heroes but specifically the heroes who died between 1940 and 1949, as the text of its name plaque indicates. These are the soldiers who fought for Greece in World War II (1940–45) as well as those whose status as heroes is a topic of fierce debate in Greece, namely, the soldiers who fought against communist guerrillas in the Greek Civil War (1945–49). This temporal definition of the heroes commemorated in the monument’s official name testifies to the anticommunist nationalism of the Spathí (Figure 1).

For about two hours—the period spanning the officials’ arrival, the parade, and the officials’ departure—an oral presentation of the events of 1920 and their significance to the Greek nation and to Komotini’s present, as well as a description
of the educational and military institutions that were filing past the officials in real time, could be heard over the many loudspeakers along the parade’s route. As in the Salonica parade that Anastasia Karakasidou (2000) analyzes, even though each yearly repetition adds in something from the specific political discourses of the day, the general script has remained largely unchanged from 1999 to 2001. The spoken and spatial texts that frame the parade indicate that the main signified of the parade is “the nation.” By linking the District Office, Democracy Street, Heroes Avenue, and the Spathí, the route serves to inscribe Komotini’s “national story” in space. Writing about Athens, Eleni Bastéa argues that the erection in the late 19th century of the Academy of Athens and the National Library on Panepistimiou (University) Street, which links Constitution Square and the university, “established [it] as the official cultural axis of the new capital” (1994:115). In a similar way, the Komotini parade seems to establish the route it traces as the official national axis of Komotini,
which functions as “the capital of western Thrace,” as is often pointed out in official publications.

Yet, within this rigid enactment of Komotini’s place in the nation, the town’s Turkish speakers experience the parade not as an event that emphasizes their exclusion but as another instance of a constant negotiation between the different meanings inscribed on their space.\(^1\) What they come to see on parade day is not so much “the nation on display” (which might, perhaps, be what attracts many Greek spectators) but, rather, they come to view their children, grandchildren, and siblings marching for the various minority schools and to meet with friends in the nearby park (which is also what might attract Greek spectators to the parade, in addition to the national display mentioned above).

For Yeşim, a young, highly educated Gümülcineli professional woman who became one of my main informants, the May 14 parade was a guarantee of quality time with her three-year-old son, Cenk. The plastic Greek flags and animal-shaped helium balloons provided him with rather expensive stimuli and generated unexpectedly perceptive questions and a look of contentment (albeit one that was transient). “Can you believe so much money for a single balloon?” she commented to me as she was paying the vendor, and then explained the reason behind this indulgence. When she was young she disliked having her aunt take her to the parade because the aunt was extremely strict. She would arrive in the morning with her smartly dressed son to pick Yeşim up, and as soon as the crowd came within sight, she would turn to both children and warn in a stern tone: “Now, remember not to embarrass me by asking for flags!” This hated warning made Yeşim decide that it was better to keep Cenk satisfied than risk a long-term grudge, for the sake of nationalist etiquette (like her aunt did), or even for the sake of economizing (as she would have liked).

This exemplifies how nationalist rhetoric structures Komotinian’s daily contact and impinges on Gümülcineli choices about how to spend time with one’s children and how to negotiate their civic, national, and consumer identities. The parade is not only an opportunity to celebrate the nation or one’s children, it is also an opportunity for the two communities to meet or ignore each other and for family relations to be emphasized over nationalist discourse (everybody makes fun of the loudspeaker commentator but claps for his or her own child). Nationalism is transformed into cultural practice at the same instance that it is rejected as conscious ideology. The playground behind the Spathí, around which the parade takes place, becomes the space of behind-the-scenes performance, where courting couples, mostly Turkish youngsters, parade under the noses of scrutinizing adults. Through the parade, different notions of place are thus communicated, internalized, and politicized by the state, on the one hand, and by Komotinians, on the other hand, to produce different kinds of discourses about the town—the nation is forgotten while being celebrated. I would argue that this ambivalent relation exemplifies the state’s symbolic control not of the monumental but of the ordinary, rendering the parade a successful exercise in biopolitical power.
Inscribing Greekness through Naming

Street signs in Komotini differ from those of other Greek cities. Virtually all the signs are divided into two sections. The top half states the name of the street in large capital letters, whereas the bottom half carries a brief explanatory comment in smaller characters. My informants often joked about the sign for Odhós Athinón (Athens Street), which carried the phrase Protévousa tis Elládhos (Capital of Greece) underneath. They wondered whom the explanation (or indeed the sign) was for, especially because this particular street runs alongside the Turkish Consulate and branches off of Iónon Street (named for the ancient tribe that inhabited a region in Asia Minor and from whose name the Turkish word Yunan, meaning Greek, derives).

Naming streets goes beyond making random choices. In Komotini, because the names have explanations appended, the person reading a street sign will always know what kinds of associations the person who named the street wanted to evoke. The street name Athens, for example, celebrates the capital city of modern Greece, not the birthplace of civilization or the ancient city-state of school textbooks—although these and other associations are possible (Hamilakis 2003). Similarly, naming streets after towns in present-day Turkey or Bulgaria celebrates not those towns’ current existence but their pasts as homelands to Greek communities. One sees the explanation Haméni Patridha (Lost Homeland) affixed to Makrás Yéfiras Street (Makrά Yéfira, now called Üzünköprű, is a town in eastern Thrace). The theme of “lost homeland” is very prevalent in street naming, and includes other geographic features besides towns. Ardhá Street, for example, is named after a river. But geographic locations in street names can also refer to places that are located within the current borders of Greece (Thásou, an Aegean island, is one such place). The fact that these names (of places within Greek territory) are part of the set of street names referring to geographic locations (that includes lost homelands) implies that the limits of national geography extend beyond Greece’s present borders and even as far as Ankara (Angíras), in the case of one sign. In so far as the latter is easily recognizable as the capital of Turkey, the failure to explain this on the sign (especially compared to the failure to explain Athens as anything other than the capital of Greece) marks out the hostile relationship between the two countries, at least at the time when these signs were produced.

The wording on the street signs thus exposes the close relationship between street naming and other state policies, especially when one looks at the timing for the addition of these explanatory inscriptions (older signs do not carry them and after 1999 many were revised). The sweeping designation of towns in both Bulgaria and Turkey as lost homelands signifies Greece’s tense relationship with both countries and was probably decided when both were considered enemy states. Informants claimed that the educational inscriptions were added “at the time of the Sadik events” (tóte me ta yeyonóta me ton Sadhik). Sadik Ahmet, a local minority politician, was famous for his extreme Turkish-nationalist positions. In the early
1990s, he was campaigning against the Greek government for minority rights. The conflict escalated, and some local Greeks organized a counterdemonstration, during which the minority shops in the center of town were attacked and looted, reportedly while riot police stood by. Interestingly, the idea of extending a nation’s identity through street signs occurred to the Turks as well. After Dr. Sadik died in Thrace, the street in front of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Istanbul was renamed by the Turkish authorities as Dr. Sadik Ahmet Street (Aarbakke 2000:626). This highlights the fact that in celebrating national achievement, conflict is also often celebrated.

Street names thus Hellenize spaces where Greek identity may be threatened. They symbolically create a Greater Greece—the (ethnically homogeneous) nation-state that is nonexistent on the ground—by expelling or cleansing otherness and incorporating the *ethnos* (as a group conceptually unified by common descent and blood ties). This utopian Hellas is a fantasy of what Greece could have been, had the policies geared toward the establishment of a Greek nation-state succeeded in achieving the Great Idea, a Greece “of the two continents and the five seas” spreading across Asia Minor. Eighty-seven of the 195 street names listed in the 1936 Komotini street guide are names of geographical locations in Greece, Asia Minor, or Bulgaria; the rest celebrate famous Greeks, Greek military men, ancient Greek tribes, or indicate important locations in the town, for example, Stratónon (Barracks) Street (General Guide to the Prefecture of Rhodoppe 1934–36).

The utopia that street names construct is thus not only geographical but also historical, projecting Hellenic place into the past. Another way in which this is done is through invoking ancient Greek heritage, be it mythology, as in Polífimou (the Cyclops in the Odyssey), or civilizational achievement, as in Epidhávrou, (the ancient theater). Similarly, the ecumenical and local significance of national history is unified in street names: Paleológu Street (from the Byzantine emperor) meets Trikoúpi (a former prime minister), from which Mavromíháli (a hero of the Greek War of Liberation) branches off, which is very close to Vizvízi (a local heroine who financially supported that war). National unity is also expressed through collective names such as Sintágmamos Kritón (the Cretan regiment that walked into Komotini in 1920) and dates such as May 14. Street signs thus carve out not only national place but also national time.

Moreover, street names unify cultural polity and political culture. They evoke the state through the commemoration of national and local political figures (e.g., Venizéлю, a leader of the Greek state, and Bakálbsi, a local former member of parliament) and carry the names of contributors to the nation’s cultural production (e.g., Kaváfí, a poet) as well as local forms of national cultural production (e.g., Tsanaklí, the donor of Komotini’s municipal library). Finally, the Greek national imaginary inscribed on Komotinian street names blends religion with culture, politics, and territory. Ánthimou commemorates a local bishop; Chrysostómou Smírnis, a former bishop of Smyrna (a city that is also a lost homeland); Makarióu,
the Cypriot archbishop who headed the island’s struggle with its Greek “mother-
land” (hence playing on the theme of “Greater Greece”); Papaflésssa, the clerical
hero of the Greek War of Independence (evoking national time); and M. Fotióu, a
well-educated Byzantine cleric who produced a wealth of ecclesiastical writings
(thus, evoking clerical cultural production).

The streets thus become the “Greek body”—politic and civic, ethnic and
religious. Street naming enunciates a biopolitics in Komotini in that it causes the
“attachment of the town onto the national body” to reverberate on the street sign
at every corner. The town becomes “the most immediate locus for the production
and circulation of [this biopolitical] power” (Grosz 1995:109). Furthermore, as
pedagogic devices, street names and the explanations of their meaning are an
educational ideological state apparatus, an institution through which reality is
manifested and reproduced (Althusser 1971:143). The explanations provide the
interpretation necessary for (nationalist state) ideology to “represent the imaginary
relations of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (Althusser 1971:162).

In a reversal of what Stephania Pandolfo terms “seeing with the body”
(1989:6), in reference to the mapping of space by one of her marginalized in-
formants, street names seek to draw the experience of walking through the town’s
streets back onto the mapmaker’s reference template, which is one of nationalistic
power and domination over the minority. The field of this power is delimited by
the buildings that mark Komotini’s boundaries: the university, the army barracks,
the hospital, some of the offices representing the central government (periféria),
and the electricity authority branch. These are all places instrumental to the pro-
duction of Greek civic identity. Their location at the town’s entry points designate
Komotini as the place where such Greek subjects are born and educated and receive
public security, health care, utilities, and other government services.

On the streets, the state that commands these aspects of everyday life des-
ignates the nation, in the name(s) of which it commands them, and makes this
nation “real” (through the invocation of wars, places, history, and culture). At
the same time, it calls into consciousness the nation’s “reality.” The development
of the nation, its moments of glory and of suffering, its losses and its gains are
recounted through street names in a way that makes the elements of Greek national-
ism explicit but also circumventable (e.g., when one invokes street names without
taking notice of their meanings or passes street name signs without reading them)
and even questionable (e.g., joking about the explanation offered for the name of
Athens Street). As Stathis Gourgouris states, “the Nation, as a social-imaginary
institution, exerts its force upon the entire range of signification and therefore
upon the entire categorization of ‘native’: upon the question what is native?” In
pointing to this question (via the explanation of street names) “the site where the
Nation resides” is marked; the street signs thus come to stand for “the navel of the
nation’s dream . . . the very topos that enables the cultural omphaloskopisis (navel
gazing) that fuels [the] nation’s reproduction” (Gourgouris 1996:45). The vari-
ous reactions to these names thus reinstitute that “component in the life of [the]
nation” that Winichakul calls the “geo-body” (1994:17). Komotinian street names reveal a biopolitical regime of power and the techniques of governmentality it gives rise to.

It is as part of these techniques that Komotinian street names emerged en masse in the 1920s: they were part of the effort to Hellenize Komotini. Similar attempts to Hellenize urban space have been documented for Athens, where shortly after it became the capital in 1834, the Royal Committee and city council undertook to replace “barbaric” place names with Greek ones (Bozos 2004; Bastéa 2000). This effort to discipline the town’s “barbarity” by Komotinian civic and military officials, who might well have included newcomers from towns now Turkish, would thus have emanated from the concern to include all the elements that made Greece “Greek.”

It is indicative of this process that Stilpon Kyriakides, a Komotinian folklorist who was also a member the committee responsible for converting Turkish village names into Greek names in 1928, delivered a number of lectures to his townsfolk at the Komotinians’ Club, seeking to enlighten them of his studies, which proved that the town’s and the region’s Hellenic heritage was something they should all be proud of. One of these lectures was devoted exclusively to the name of the town itself. In it, Kyriakides maintained that the switch from the Turkish Gümülcline to the Greek Komotini signaled a restoration of the town’s Greek essence, because the Turkish name derives from the Greek word *kumutzína* (fields belonging to the Roman wife of a soldier of rank, or *komítissa*, or to a person named Kumutzís). With this claim, Kyriakides (1966:52–55) refuted etymologies that linked the town’s name to Turkish words, such as *kümür* (charcoal) or *gömülü* (buried).

This attempt to deny a Turkish derivation for a Turkish place name confirms that the “Turkishness” of Komotinian space was a matter of controversy. Thus, the change in the format of street signs points to the implicit aspects of nationalization, by which the stamping of identity onto the landscape also confirms the limits of that identity. The new explanations of names might thus be an effort to make explicit the dangers of questioning the relationship between lost homelands and the present state, of taking naming less seriously, or of forgetting the nation. Such perceptions of danger—the danger of “insiders” forgetting Greek places and the danger caused by the presence of “outsiders”—could have brought about the reshuffling of names that took place between 1936 and 2001. Comparison reveals that, during this time, names have changed streets and streets have changed names. What remained unchanged, however, were the general themes that guide street naming. An inventory of these names in fact suggests that these themes could be used as a “checklist” of the nation’s labels—the nation’s “business card” as Augé would call it (1995:68). In this sense, the reshuffling is to be seen primarily as a reaffirmation of the nation’s credentials and thus another example of the imagination of the nation in corporeal terms.

I would argue that such policies of naming, renaming, reshuffling names, and educating the population on the politics and histories of names, which have
maintained the currency of Komotinian toponymies, compliment other technologies of governmentality. The attempt to settle Greek refugee populations in this demographically “suspect” territory, reprised in the 1990s with the policy of settling Greek-origin repatriates from the former Soviet Union, could be understood as such. Toponymy and repatriation can thus be viewed as examples of the “realization” of the force of nationalism that H. R. Wilkinson talks about in his study of the politics of ethnographic maps, in which he states that “although the ideas originally expressed may have been divorced from reality, their power to suggest relationships, to stimulate aspirations and to mould policies, has been a very real force” (1951:324–326). Similar techniques have been described by Timothy Mitchell, in his analysis of the British colonization of Egypt, a process in which he considers the primary force to be the attempt to “re-order Egypt to appear as a world enframed . . . to be ordered up as something object-like . . . picture-like and legible, rendered available to political and economic calculation” (1988:33). The concept of “enframing” is deployed there to refer to these techniques of production and reproduction of colonial subjects, in which the object being enframed is the nation as an entity that must be actively produced as having an objective reality. Education, as one of the techniques of enframing that Mitchell analyzes, played a primary role in transposing the Hellenization of Komotini as territory onto the Hellenization of its inhabitants.

Together with the naming of streets and other urban planning projects, these settlement policies provide examples of technologies that create and reproduce Komotini as Greek but also as in need of confirmation of its Greekness. Both processes have been predicated on the paradox of identifying Komotini as (thoroughly and justifiably) Greek while “intimately” (Herzfeld 1997) knowing that this was not quite so.16 It is exactly this paradox that first the absence and then the appearance of explanations on street signs communicates. The later addition of explanations under the names of streets is thus a strategy that imparts knowledge about specific names that a good citizen should already possess and thereby affirms the imperative of knowing such knowledge. But the explanations also communicate a fear of losing the national meanings that older street signs were meant to convey, which were no longer self-evident and needing to be re-taught. Street naming and the explanations employed in it effect, as Mitchell puts it, the division between “the realm of things and the separate realm of their meaning or truth” (1988:149).

An illustration of the effectiveness of this division is offered by the following vignette, which is also indicative of the transition between Komotinian Greek and Turkish space.

**Dead Ends: Discursive and Spatial**

I was returning to Komotini after a short Christmas trip home and had been sitting in the bus from Alexandroupoli airport for an hour after a day spent traveling. The flickering lights of various disreputable establishments finally indicated arrival
at the outskirts of town. The group of students in the seat behind me seemed just as eager to reach the end of the journey.

“We are here—Greece—at long last!” exclaimed one of the girls with relief, only to be corrected with a skeptical “Greece? Now? You should rather say we’ve been in Greece thus far and are now entering . . . ” from her friend. The first speaker quickly filled the pause “It’s Greece, I tell you. What else would it be? Ah, my homeland!” The man who was the third party in the group had curiously kept quiet and rejoined the conversation as soon as it returned to joke telling.

Although a rather clumsy way for Greeks to refer to Komotini as a “minority town,” this incident brought back memories of the ways other Greeks have introduced their town. Perhaps the most direct of such descriptions was the parenthetic comment of a salesman in the middle of a discussion on kitchen appliances:

**Salesman:** You want a kettle—have a look at those ones. So, how do you like Komotini?

**Author:** It’s a nice town.

**S:** Well, it would be better, though, without the Muslims [smirking]! We have this one in three colors.

These two examples reveal succinctly the lived relation between Greek nationalism and the minority. In the first, there is no specific reference to the minority apart from very clear allusion in the ellipsis (vocally appearing as a halt midway in the speaker’s sentence—“now entering . . .”). However, in the second example, the minority is designated by its “proper,” that is, its official, name, “Muslims.” This difference qualifies the degree of aptness in the speaker’s definition of Komotini because it is based on how well versed in formal political discourse the speakers are. This differential ability would imply that since the appearance of the governmental policy of designating the minority as “Muslim” in 1983, the local Greek community has adopted it to differing extents.

As a forerunner to the ban on Turkish identification, the use of Turkish names to refer to villages in newspapers and other documents was disallowed in 1977 (Jong 1980:xii). Through this policy, place names suddenly became politically loaded. Even though Turkish village names are still used in Turkish conversation and in the minority press, in which they appear in brackets next to the transliteration of their Greek name (e.g., Hemetli [Organi]), when I would ask Turks to give me the Turkish name of their village, they would often hesitate before realizing it was not a trick question.

The Greek community has on the whole adopted this terminology in everyday usage. In the majority of instances when the minority is referred to as “Turks,” the term is used to make a political point—for example, by leftists refusing to use the official rhetoric. However, the first example points to a problem. In attempting to pose “Greek” and “Muslim” as antonyms, the speaker realizes that this relationship does not hold and thus stops mid-sentence. On the one hand, the first speaker is expressing the view that there is more patriotic feeling (“more Greece”) in
Komotini than anywhere else (after all, she had been in Greek territory throughout the journey), and this renders the town a signifier for Greece itself ("my homeland!"). On the other hand, the second speaker is shifting the unit of measurement from qualitative to quantitative (fewer Greeks). However, in choosing to effect the shift by keeping "Greece" as a bridging concept she finds herself at a dead end because the opposite of Greece is Turkey, and the opposite of Greeks are Turks, but the people she is referring to are, in her discourse, Muslims. The ellipsis stands not only for the people, but also for the shift back from "Turks" to "Muslims.

This shift is achieved by the first speaker’s obviously unanswerable (because the answer would be almost treacherous) and thus triumphantly patriotic "What else [if not Greece] would it [homeland] be?"

"Komotini" as a concept thus seems directly related to images of the "others" who live there, whether these are specified as "minority," "Turks," "Muslims," or are simply merged into a hazy concept of "non-Greek." Despite the indications about the ever presentness of these concepts, note that they are voiced at points when Komotini’s boundaries are being crossed—with the entry of the bus into the town or in my mention of having come from abroad. This would suggest that this "otherness" inheres mostly in the place aspect of Komotini. In other words, it is Komotini as place first and foremost that prompts these images of "eccentricity" with respect to the concept of "Greece." And it is this eccentricity that the state has attempted to overwrite by inscribing Greekness onto Komotini’s streets, producing, in the process, "dead ends."

Komotinian streets are only labeled if they lead into other streets. This means that dead ends do not have names. They are simply called Adhiéxodos A, Adhiéxodos B (Dead End A, Dead End B) followed by the name of the main streets they branch off from. These dead ends are found in the oldest neighborhoods and are presumably the result of house division through connecting yard doors (komşu kapı), which are a feature of Turkish houses. Komşu kapı were mainly used by the women of the house and could function as "private paths" leading from one house to another. The gender connotations invested in these dead ends endow minority spaces with multiple layers of seclusion beyond the dichotomy of private–public. Although internal yard doors may create hidden itineraries, the dead ends are not quite "public" spaces but are rather seen almost as extensions of the houses found alongside them. The existence of these doors contributes to the ghettoized quality of minority neighborhoods as enclosed areas governed by specific strategies of coding the private and the public that, in view of the wider geography of Komotini, render these areas "intimate" or "private." In this sense, the plastering and closing off of these doors, which is related to the growth of families and thus the consanguineal distance between neighbors, and perhaps as well, the advent of modern concepts of privacy, also suggests a shift in this coding of these multiple levels of privacy. The lack of names for these roads seems, if not calculated, at least symbolically significant. Dead-end streets serve members of the minority almost
exclusively and, therefore, they are not “public” spaces. Hence, to not name them reinforces the image of the minority as secluded and marginal while at the same time stressing the exclusion of the minority from the formal nationalist mapping of Komotini. As streets without names, dead ends are places outside the scope of nationalizing strategies and subject to different techniques of governmentality. They are illustrative of where the state draws the line in bringing Turkish neighborhoods into its symbolic compass. The ambivalence governing the relationship (safety of privacy, recognition that Greek formal rhetoric is unable to account for the minority, or denigration of the minority into an “alien” element) extends beyond spatial arrangement. It forms the basis on which minority conceptualizations of space are predicated and from where intercommunal spatial communication becomes possible. Dead ends are spaces of exception that constitute the law of street naming and space making.

Turkish Neighborhoods

Although Greek officials were intensely concerned to name streets, they have spent little effort on naming neighborhoods, which are more central to local Turkish notions of space. My Gümülcineli friends often talked about Kır Mahalle (“the countryside neighborhood,” presumably because of its location near fields when it was originally established). They would use the name in Turkish but would translate it into Greek as Filippoupoléos (after the name of the main street running through it, which is also the Greek name of the town of Plovdiv in Bulgaria). Similarly, when explaining to Turks where I lived, I would often say “OTE nin yanında” (“next to OTE [the national telecommunications office]”), but I would give my street address to Greeks. Both Turks and Greeks refer to urban locations in terms of well-known structures nearby, however, in Turkish this is done as further specification after the name of the neighborhood is given, whereas in Greek it is a further generalization after giving the street name. One could thus speak here of different “semiologies of orientation” (Mounin 1980).

Such separate understandings of place as street- and neighborhood-centered are akin to the standard administrative division of space according to different levels of scaling. The peculiarity of Komotini lies in the use of these spatial scales. The Greek authorities, using Ottoman understandings of identity as membership in religious community (millet), sectioned the town into quarters on a religious basis, with neighborhoods constituting parishes that were named after the patron saint of the neighborhood church. Thus, Greek neighborhoods have saint names, whereas many Turkish neighborhoods share their name with the local mosque. However, at this level of spatial division, the names of the Turkish neighborhoods remain within the collective knowledge of the minority group and outside the boundaries of the habitus (Bourdieu 1977) of their Greek neighbors. These names officially appear in the public domain only on elections, when ballot boxes are marked using names of electoral centers at the parish level. Thus, results appear on national television
as “Komotiní: Agía Paraskevi” (Komotini: St. Paraskevi [parish]), “Komotiní: Kır Mahallâ” (Komotini: Kır neighborhood).

This use of Turkish neighborhood names, otherwise inaccessible to Greeks, to define place suggests a difference in location (and thus identity) registers between Greek officialedom and the minority. For the former, the latter might alternatively be conceptualized as “inhabitants of dead-end streets” rather than “inhabitants of Kır Mahalle.” In refraining from naming neighborhoods, Greek officialedom seems to accept the town’s mapping in Turkish, producing a concept of the “minority” located outside the cartography of the town. Minority space only becomes visible at instances of political significance when it serves to quantify minority political preferences and map out political strategies for future elections. This also explains the nonnationalization of rural areas, where names do not appear in writing apart from occasional documents transferring legal ownership. Publicly available maps do not include rural space names, nor do they include mahalle names—but they do include street and village names.

Michael Herzfeld, speaking of place names in Rethymno, interprets locals’ use of older Turkish names as resistance to the state’s appropriation of space (1999). The absence of the town’s former Turkish inhabitants, who left after the island’s detachment from the Ottoman Empire, rendered the usage of Turkish place names a less problematic field of knowledge and their use in everyday speech a question of antistate politics rather than antinational, as appears to be the case in Komotini. In Cyprus, on the other hand, state policies of map making obliterate “otherness” from cartographic space by failing to map regions and monuments (Zisimou 1998). In Komotini, the presence of the minority as an Other prompts the obliteration of space on the official level and an avoidance of naming on the everyday level. Intercommunal interactions evoke ethnic differentiation, and for this reason, naming becomes a highly politicized affair.

For most Gümülcinelis, mahalles are categories used in everyday speech and are rarely represented in written form. This double register operates in the two different languages simultaneously, thus exposing several characteristics of the way the two communities interact. It shows the separation that pervades daily interaction—the separation of social meaning that attends the linguistic separation between Turks and Greeks in Komotini. It also shows how such differences are adjusted in ways that allow Turks to function within their group and in relation to Greeks—an adjustment that becomes possible only because formal discourse fails to regulate all aspects of social life. Turkish-speakers thus still refer to Leofóros Iróon as Yeni Yol (New Street), which seems to imply that it preexisted the name conversion of the 1920s, and that state efforts to inscribe Greekness failed not only on the level of what they excluded (mahalles and rural space), but also in cases in which street space had been socialized and linguistically domesticated before the conversion. However, few, if any, local Greeks are familiar with this name and when referring to the street in conversation with Greeks, minority members always use the term Iróon. In effect, minority members are fluent in two spatial codes,
whereas Greeks usually are fluent in only one and exceptions to this rule are seen as highly significant.  

The following example offers a good illustration of this point. After many attempts to find a taxi, Yeşim managed to stop one and I hopped in with her son. She greeted the taxi driver in Greek and gave the street address, whereupon her son Cenk asked rather assertively what the man had replied. Yeşim whispered that he should save his questions until we reached our destination, but he insisted even more loudly. The taxi driver turned around, smiled, and gave a translation in Turkish, which was that he was not quite sure where this street was. Then he turned to Yeşim and asked in Greek whether this street was in Yeni mahallá. She later related the incident to friends, stressing the driver’s kindness to Cenk’s rudeness.

This exchange shows that the pattern of talking about space can be used as a template for talking about individual politics. The taxi driver was using Turkish to express his kindness toward a child. He was doing politics by naming Yeni mahallá in Greek, even though this was done primarily for convenience. He was ensuring that he was indeed driving in the correct direction, but at the same time, he was letting Yeşim know that, unlike many Greeks, he was able to use her spatial code. This suggests that in addition to the existence of the double register, which otherwise seems linguistically confined, there also exists the ability to shift and switch between languages and between the codes (in this case spatial) that go with them. This is also indicative of how the uncertainty of formal discourse provides room for personal manipulation without placing individuals outside it. Thus, the taxi driver, who was in his 50s, considered it an appropriate use of a Turkish name without making a statement of political significance (because a Greek name does not exist for the specific location). Yet his use of the Turkish spatial code that followed his use of the Turkish language was a silent statement of the intercultural communication that was taking place.

Such silent statements underlie most of the spatial communication between Greeks and Turks in Komotini, even if this communication is rarely as cordial as this one. This spatial politics is particularly acute when it comes to village names in that one makes a very clear statement of ethnic allegiance by the name one chooses. This discursive politics reflects the politics between the Greek and Turkish states and stems from the debate about the minority’s Turkishness that arose in 1983. This taxi driver might not have been aware of the possible political connotations of Yeni mahallá, but the lack of official policy on the matter allowed him to use his knowledge primarily for reasons of expediency while choosing not to acknowledge wider political implications. The double register creates political dissonance, but through the room for personal manipulation that it provides, it can also create convergence.

However loose formal nationalism seems to be in this case, it appears to have become curiously rigid in the last couple of decades. I often heard younger Greeks, in their twenties and thirties, refer to the northern part of the town as
Tourkomahallá. This term means “the Turkish neighborhood,” in which the word chosen for “neighborhood” is of Turkish origin and therefore carries a derogatory implication, unlike the Greek-origin alternative *sinikía* or *yitoniá*, normally used for Greek neighborhoods. Very few young Greeks seemed to know any names for the different mahalles, even though many had minority friends. Neither the driver nor these younger Greeks were being consciously political. Tourkomahallás is used to define a location in very practical terms, in a similar way that the driver uses Yeni mahallá. The denigration implied in the first term and the national connotations of the latter are only subsidiary, even unintended (but not revocable). In this sense, the difference between the driver and the young Greeks in terms of their knowledge of the town’s Turkish places represents the shift of spatial knowledge into the sphere of what Aretxaga calls “implicit knowledge” (1997:33)—the knowledge that definitively distinguishes people in terms of their ethnicity.

Through this shift, the use of Turkish names (by Greeks or Turks) has been rendered a potentially political act. Greek naming (whether official names for streets, or otherwise, e.g., Tourkomahallás) is thus “normalized” and divested of explicit nationalist connotations, becoming an instance of “banal nationalism.” Although the taxi driver was only implicitly doing politics, Yeşim was very aware that the switch she made as she pronounced the street address in Greek was a political one. Even though it may also have been largely determined by expediency, this does not diminish the “consciousness” with which it was done. A parallel situation pertains to the use of village names. Despite the politicization of village names in minority newspapers (or perhaps because of it), the usual practice is to simplify the matter. Thus, names are translated automatically, even from mahalles into streets—indicating that the separation of physical space is also a separation of linguistic, social, and political space. “Implicit knowledge” is not enclosed within two different spheres in this case but differentiated as Greek “banal nationalism” and the (minority) knowledge of “spatial bilingualism.” The incident in the taxi shows that, through the use of this spatial bilingualism, banal nationalism may be resisted while still framing the limiting terms of debate.

The End of Place and the Reconfiguration of Relationships

The change in the content of “implicit knowledge” was also related to the conditions that prompted the addition of explanations of names on street signs and the politicization of village names. These conditions also brought about the reconfiguration of Turkish places. Yeşim often described her grandmother’s pride in living in a house her husband had built himself, away from the houses of their parents. The story invariably ended with expressions of relief that her grandmother had died before receiving the notice from the local council that it was to be torn down to make space for a wider street. The house was in an old Turkish neighborhood and was the last from the mahalle to survive similar evictions for planning projects. The flat where I lived in 1998–99 was also near an old Turkish mahalle.
The only Turkish houses in the area that were still inhabited were located next to a mosque and seemed an oddity in the midst of multistory, grey concrete structures that now house Greek-owned shops and Greek middle-class families. Empty plots often separated these blocks, and on the walls, dead-end street labels were visible, designated for removal because the plots opened to the streets behind, and connecting paths were already being laid out and prepared for asphalt paving.

These activities provide evidence of the encroachment of Greekness onto Turkish places in a way that is different from what I have been describing for street names. The relation here did not concern different conceptual levels but was rather a very material process, through which place gained different meanings. In this sense, place, as socially constructed in particular ways, ceased to exist. For friends of mine who lived there, some of the new blocks in my area reminded them of the former Turkish owners, who had sold the land on which they were built. Despite differences in the circumstances of these sales, they seemed symptomatic of a policy instituted during the Junta period (1967–74), and not revoked until 1991, forbidding the “uncontrolled sale of property in border areas”—effectively translated in Komotini as a ban on the sale of Greek property to local Turks but with the active encouragement of sales in the opposite direction.

When I returned to Komotini in 2004, construction sites were to be found in all Turkish mahalles, and the majority of the Gümülcinelis I spoke with had stories to tell of the sale of the family house in exchange for flats in a new building block (andiparohi) built by one of the construction companies active in the town. In most cases, these companies were based in other northern Greek towns, and the deals involved the exchange of the land for about 30–40 percent of the building to be erected. The demolition of Turkish houses to build Greek apartment blocks was rarely mentioned with resentment by minority informants. Yeşim would guide me through the history of such buildings matter-of-factly, and friends would announce deals with Greek contractors to build blocks on their land with mixed feelings of joy, because they would receive their own floor, and of frustration, because they felt they might have gotten more out of the deal. Yeşim herself had moved into one of these flats in a block inhabited by both Greeks and Turks.

“Respect for privacy” was often mentioned in discussions about the terms of coexistence in these buildings—a code that marks the subtle line in social etiquette between avoidance and friendliness. This concept of “privacy” is different to the “privacy” effected by the enclosure of the minority within dead-end streets and the ghettoization arising from the state’s refusal to name, and thus encompass, the minority in its topos. This concept of “privacy” provides a code through which individuals can relate to each other, or not. Friends often described their experiences attending tenants’ meetings with some amusement, highlighting the micropolitics of this new form of interethnic coexistence in the questions or phrases revealing the limited knowledge of minority realities on the part of Greek neighbors and in arguments that cut across ethnic differences or those in which such differences play a key role.
The opening up of dead ends and the building of new blocks of flats suggest a shift in the logic of governmentality. No longer focused on the production of the nation through exclusion, governance is now more driven by neoliberal market logics. However this does not mean that the state has receded in favor of market dynamics. Rather, the changing conceptions of “privacy” are to be seen as indicative of a change in governmental practice. As Lemke states in his examination of Foucault’s treatment of the concept:

From the perspective of governmentality, government refers to a continuum, which extends from political government right through to forms of self-regulation, namely “technologies of the self.” . . . The neo-liberal forms of government feature not only direct intervention by means of empowered and specialized state apparatuses, but also characteristically develop indirect techniques for leading and controlling individuals without at the same time being responsible for them. [Lemke 2001:201]

In other words, what appears here as a retreat of the state, in terms of the biopolitical power exercised over the minority, is itself a technique of government, resulting not in the exclusion of the minority but in the “shifting of regulatory competence of the state onto ‘responsible’ and ‘rational’ individuals” (Lemke 2001:202)—in this case, real estate development companies and minority individuals exchanging their plots and houses for flats. This in turn inaugurates a different biopolitics, in which these individuals are faced with life choices that are political, such as choosing to identify as middle-class Greek citizens rather than members of a minority or sending their children to Greek schools rather than minority schools on the basis of offering them better education and career prospects. These choices may be premised on the politicization of life that has long been the case in Komotini, as exemplified in the choice of national, civic, and consumer identities implicated in the buying of a national flag discussed above. However, they now entail a different concept of “responsibility” tied to different material conditions.

Although, for individuals such as Yeşim, this may indeed lead to the successful social integration that had eluded Greek minority policies for the last few decades, the question remains about the future of less “responsible” minority individuals, such as those living on the other side of town in houses they have built without planning permission and on land that is fast becoming sought after for real estate development.

Conclusion

In examining how Greek and Turkish Komotinians negotiate space in the context of asymmetrical intercommunal relations, I argue that the state practice of street naming in Komotini reflects continuities in the Greek national imaginary that have persisted despite changes in governments and policies. A unified national narrative can be reconstructed out of the analysis of diverse official practices such as space naming and the utilization of space in state rituals such as parades. Both practices result from the interaction of local officials, the national government, scientists, educators, cultural associations, and others whose individual approaches
Uses of space both create and reflect tensions between ideology and lived experience, shaping interactions between Greeks and local Turkish speakers. Space making can be ethnically specific, but where interethnic relations pertain, it can also be plural. Different models of space can become available for use in different contexts. The fact that Gümülcinelis conceptualize urban space in terms of a double register further politicizes the daily experience of space. Thus, the sedimentation of the history of Greco–Turkish relations becomes visible in Komotinian urban space as do the effects of contemporary ongoing tensions. Space serves both as a palimpsest of these relations as well as a mechanism for sifting this history.

The penetration of governmentality into the quotidian suggests that the politicization of space provides at once the possibility of subversion as well as the conditions for the reconfiguration of place. I have thus explored the modes of production, reproduction, articulation, and obliteration of the place making that attends national (and ethnic) identities in Komotini. The production and reproduction of power that inheres in these processes indicates the shifts in the different modes of governmentality employed in the management of Komotini’s minority population.

Notes

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1. I distinguish transliterated Greek words from Turkish through the use of diacritics denoting vowel accentuation (e.g., ensomáosi).

2. The significance of this moment as expressed in local oral history is examined in Demetriou 2006.

3. For Greek nationalist efforts to realize this idea see Llewellyn Smith 1998.


5. Here, I am using Agamben’s phrase “state of exception” to suggest that the situation is one that “cannot be defined either as a situation of fact [in this case the homogeneity of the Greek nation] or as a situation of right [in as far as the existence of the minority is the result of the law that homogenizes the nation], but instead institutes a paradoxical threshold of indistinction between the two” (1998:18). Whereas Agamben reserves the phrase for “the situation that results from [the] suspension [of order]” (1998:18) when sovereign power is suspended at the moment it creates the law that legitimizes it, I would like to suggest here that similar situations pertain in the more mundane application of the “law” (of Greece’s
fulfillment as a nation, which implies an absent homogeneity), following its enunciation, when that very enunciation requires that part of the law be forsaken.

6. On the politics and particularly the limits of this concept of the word *multiculturalism* see Demetriou 2004b. On its articulation in relation to Greece’s EU membership see Yiakoumaki 2003.

7. These identities are highly contested: Turkish speakers who maintain they are Turks point to others as Gypsies or Pomaks, even when these others claim a Turkish identity. Identification is intimately linked to Greco–Turkish politics, and this link is most clearly visible in the contest over Pomak identity. According to some perspectives, Pomaks are Slav-speaking Muslims who have lived in Thrace for centuries. Greek nationalists claim that Pomaks are Islamicized Greeks, and Turkish nationalists say they are ethnically Turkish. However, informants in Thrace offer explanations that contest all of these perspectives (Demetriou 2004b).

8. Herzfeld (1991) has described such processions in Rethymno.

9. The word *spathi* (sword) is emphasized in the opening couplet of the Greek national anthem, in which Liberty, carrying a sword, is apostrophized: “Σε γνωρίζω από τιν κόψη / του Σθαθιότιν τρομέρ” [I recognize you from the razing edge / the terrifying edge of the Sword]. Rudyard Kipling (1918) expressed it this way: “We knew thee of old, / Oh, divinely restored, / By the lights of thine eyes / And the light of thy Sword.”

10. During World War II, Greek resistance to the Nazis was led by two opposing camps, communist and nationalist. The two came into conflict with each other throughout the occupation (despite the fact that they also occasionally collaborated against the Nazis). At the end of the occupation, a civil war ensued, and it lasted effectively until 1949. On this period of Greek history, see Clogg 2002, Close 1993, Koliopoulos 1999, and Mazower 2000.

11. This is not to suggest that local Greeks all perceive the parade in exactly the way that the authorities intend but rather that the ways in which the minority population perceives the parade are not available to them (whereas mainstream Greek perspectives are inescapable for minority spectators).

12. Examinations of space in Greece have also pointed to the ways in which architectural styles nationalize space (Herzfeld 1987, 1991) and the ways in which monumental spaces (e.g., the Parthenon) come to signify Hellas (Yalouri 2002).

13. For attempts to Turkify formerly multiethnic regions in Turkey through cleansing otherness from the landscape and toponymy, see ¨Oktem 2004.

14. On the work of Kyriakides and his academic milieu see Demetriou 2004a.

15. In the beginning of the last century, Wace and Thompson coined the phrase “political philology” to describe similar claims to Greekness established through etymology (1914:9).

16. I am using this term after Herzfeld’s concept of “cultural intimacy,” which he defines as “the recognition of those aspects of cultural identity that are considered a source of external embarrassment but that nevertheless provide insiders with their assurance of common sociality” (1997:3).

17. Exemplary use of these distinctions can be found in Turkish ethnographies by Delaney (1991) and Marcus (1992) and in Greek ethnographies by Hirschon (1978, 1998) and Dubisch (1995).

18. I would like to stress that although this is not to imply that the minority’s knowledge of the town is more intimate—it certainly is where this concerns Turkish mahalles but it would be difficult to make this statement for the whole of the town in general. Indeed, even though many of the local Greeks can trace their ancestry to immigrants from outside western Thrace, as pointed out in the introduction, the vast majority have been born and
raised in Komotini, and they consider the town “theirs” to no lesser degree than do minority residents. This impact of history on local articulations of links to the town and the land has been explored in Demetriou 2002:36–82.

19. I take this phrase from Billig, who defines it as an “ideological habit.” Once the nation has been established, it has no need to fly the flag but lets it hang outside public buildings. It is through the process of being “daily . . . ‘flagged’ in the lives of its citizenry” that the nation fosters banal nationalism and through which “national populations . . . [are] primed, ready to support” national causes (1995:6–7).

20. One might ask here whether counterexamples to this political usage of naming space are available, as for example in the possibility that Greek Komotinians might forego the ease of using the Turkish name of a mahalle in preference for the Greek street name. As the foregoing discussion has, I hope, made clear, such instances would be extremely rare, if at all possible, as the knowledge of Turkish mahalle names among local Greeks is disappearing and as street names are the primary way in which a Greek comes to learn Komotinian space. This is exactly why I argue that his use of the name is political: it is only possible for the knowledge of the Turkish name to be more difficult to attain than the Greek one, not the other way round. What can be said is that the two spatial codes converge on failure of whichever is the primary one, so that when Greeks expressed lack of knowledge about the location of a particular street, the explanation involved reference to a well-known building near by. Similarly, when I explained to informants where I lived “in the center,” I would use the well-known landmark of the national telecommunications company next to my building.

21. These concrete blocks are usually erected by wealthy local Greeks, and the flats they contain are rented by students or bought by families who cannot afford to build their own house. Wealthier Greek Komotinians tend to live in other areas of the town.

22. For a statistical indication of how this affected ethnically defined sales of property see Demetriou 2002:348–351.

23. Recent shifts in minority policies have been related to wider EU-induced policy shifts, such as decentralization (Anagnostou 2001). Changes in place making could be subsumed under these shifts insofar as the EU structural funds provided for the development of this once “poorest region in the EU” have played a role in the rising interest in the town’s property sector.

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**ABSTRACT** In light of recent discussions on the anthropology of space and theories of governmentality, this article analyzes the entrenchment and interaction in space of ethnic and national identities in an environment in which competing conceptualizations of space persist. The town of Komotini, in northern Greece, is inhabited by both Greek and Turkish speakers; both communities have claims to a variety of ethnic and geographical origins. These claims are presented in different contexts, such as national celebrations, street naming, and instances of communal and intercommunal interaction. The article analyzes how the claims of different actors are related through the examination of space making by state officials, minority residents, and local Greeks, all of whom acknowledge, albeit in different ways, the inconsistencies of a Greek national imaginary within Komotinian space. [National space making, governmentality, biopolitics, Turkish minority, western Thrace]